

WWII

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Bringing History to Life

Hitler freed Mussolini

Germany's Führer deployed special forces on a secret operation behind enemy lines

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

ABDUCTION IN CRETE

Kidnappers hid German general in mountain caves

CANOE MISSION

Ten elite British marines set out to sabotage freighters

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN ACTION

The battle is won, the enemy driven out, and everyone can breathe again. Many field generals thought this – but generals often make mistakes. Throughout World War II, specially trained soldiers made sure that the enemy never rested in peace. Command units struck anywhere and at any time: a German general was kidnapped in the middle of Crete, while commandos liberated Benito Mussolini from his prison on a mountain top. And British units blew up factories in a Norwegian town to deprive Germany of important raw materials. The warring parties also employed trickery, like when the Nazis tried to undermine Britain's economy with fake bank notes, or when the British planted false documents on the corpse of an "officer" detailing plans for an imminent invasion of Greece.

Bringing History to Life takes you undercover on some of the war's most daring missions.

Happy reading!



*A glider was stranded
in Italy after German
special troops landed
to free Mussolini.*

1941-45



1939

- 6 U-boat sneaks into British naval base**
Germans score direct hit to sink *HMS Royal Oak*.

1940

- 14 Special forces capture Belgian fort**
Nine German gliders fly into Belgium's strongest fortress.
- 22 British pilots stand up to Luftwaffe**
German bombers terrorise Britain for 114 days.

1941

- 32 Lightning raid sabotages Nazi war machine**
British raid destroys important factories in Norway.

1942

- 42 UK sterling forged by KZ camp inmates**
The Nazis attempt to undermine the British economy.
- 52 Canoes sneak marines into enemy docks**
Commandos mine ships in Bordeaux harbour.

1943

- 60 Military elite fight on the front line**
Special forces take on the war's most dangerous missions.
- 68 Dressed to fool the Germans**
Dead "major" becomes unlikely hero of the war.
- 76 Dambusters smash Nazi war effort**
New bouncing bombs skip over obstacles to destroy key targets.
- 86 Special forces liberate Mussolini**
Hitler's toughest warrior tracks down former dictator.

1944

- 96 British agents abduct German general**
Crete's resistance take their chance for revenge.
- 106 Sabotage creates chaos in France**
The Resistance paralyses occupiers on the night before D-Day.
- 114 Submarines duel to the death**
Germans attempt to send secret weapons to Japan.

The background is a composite image. The upper portion shows a dark teal night sky filled with numerous small, bright stars. On the left side, there are five horizontal white lines, resembling a ladder or a scale. The lower portion of the image shows the dark silhouette of a ship, likely a battleship, with its masts and gun turrets visible against the starry sky. The ship is positioned on the right side, with its bow pointing towards the left.

1939

13TH OCTOBER

U-BOAT SNEAKS INTO BRITISH NAVAL BASE

World War II is only one month old when the British are shaken by the first full strike. On 13th October, 1939, a German submarine slides into the heavily guarded British military port Scapa Flow on the Orkney Islands and fires seven torpedoes at the battleship *HMS Royal Oak*.

The crew on HMS Royal Oak were sleeping peacefully in their cabins when the torpedoes hit. Within a few minutes there was burning chaos.

THE STAGE IS SET

War broke out in September 1939. But at the old base of Scapa Flow on the Orkney Islands the British feel safe. The base is almost impregnable, protected by sunken ships, submarine nets and an unpredictable tide. But the enemy has found a hole in the defences and outside the base, a German submarine lurks on the sea floor.



THERE WAS A CHILL IN THE AIR ON the evening of 13th October, 1939. Everything was quiet aboard the battleship *HMS Royal Oak*, which was anchored at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, one of Britain's safest and most closely guarded ports.

Sunken naval vessels blocked the entrances to the harbour and between these so-called blockships were submarine nets, meaning that the crew of the almost 200-metre-long *Royal Oak* could sleep soundly – even though Britain had just declared war on Germany after Hitler's invasion of Poland a month earlier.

Suddenly a series of massive explosions filled the air with a deafening thunder as a huge column of water shot up the battleship's hull, with flames shooting out from the *Royal Oak* herself. Pieces of mast, chimneys and parts of the command bridge were flung into the air along with members of the crew.

Some bodies flew through the air, while others had already died as they hit the oil-filled sea. Cries of burning soldiers blended with shouts for help from those who slowly drowned in the slick oil. The old British warship was hit hard and sinking. Precious minutes were lost before the British found out what had happened:

Against all odds, an unknown submarine had found its way into the naval harbour, fired its torpedoes and was already on its way back through the shallow Kirk Sound, where four

30 merchant

ships from eight different nationalities were sunk by the German submarine U-47. Among them were four Norwegian, one Swedish and one Danish.

blockships obstructed the exit. In Kirk Sound the water depth was so low and the flow so erratic that fleet commanders were sure that no vessel could penetrate. The area was not mined, and no submarine nets had been stretched out between the blockships.

GERMANS WANTED REVENGE

Anti-submarine nets were part of the standard mix in many bases used by the British navy when warships were repaired or taken out of

service. One of the oldest and best guarded was Scapa Flow. It had been used since the Viking age and was basically a natural harbour with a bay protected by a number of surrounding inlets and islets.

The harbour, located centrally on the Orkney Islands north of Scotland, was secured during WWI with mines, submarine nets and blockships. Among the sunken ships were several German ships from the First World War, where German naval vessels had been detained in Scapa Flow and later sunk.

The sinking of proud Kriegsmarine warships was not the only humiliation that the Germans experienced in connection with Scapa Flow. Twice during WWI, Germany had attempted to attack British ships in the guarded natural harbour. Both missions failed.

The first time was in November 1914, when the submarine U-18 was hit and sunk by a trawler. The second was in October 1918, when the submarine UB-116 was discovered by underwater sound waves and destroyed by a remote controlled mine. Therefore, the German desire to hit the British fleet in Scapa Flow was not just a strategic move: it also represented great symbolic value for the Nazi regime.

ADMIRAL FOUND A HOLE IN THE DEFENCE

The plan for the attack on Scapa Flow had come from the top of Kriegsmarine command, and Karl Dönitz – Rear Admiral and “Commander of the Submarines” – believed he had found a hole in the base's defences.

Dönitz discovered that the British had not put any submarine nets in the eastern region of Kirk Sound, where there were only four major sunken ships blocking the deepest water in the strait, while a narrow low tide passage in the northernmost part of the entrance was still open.

To the south, a gap 170 metres wide with water depths of up to eight metres would allow a German submarine to squeeze into Scapa Flow. Even better, there were

HMS Royal Oak had earned its place in the British fleet in 1914, but gradually it became too slow for modern war.



U-47 gets into Scapa Flow

The entry to Scapa Flow was blocked by wrecked ships. But the strong tides in Kirk Sound helped U-47 into the harbour, where two British battleships – *HMS Royal Oak* and *HMS Pegasus* – were anchored.



The commanding officer on the submarine was Captain Günther Prien.

WELL-PROTECTED BASE

ORKNEY ISLANDS

SCAPA FLOW

NORTH SEA

SCOTLAND

U-47's route

3 Second attack 01.21

Four torpedoes are set off. *Royal Oak* is hit twice and the ship quickly sinks.

2 First attack 01.16

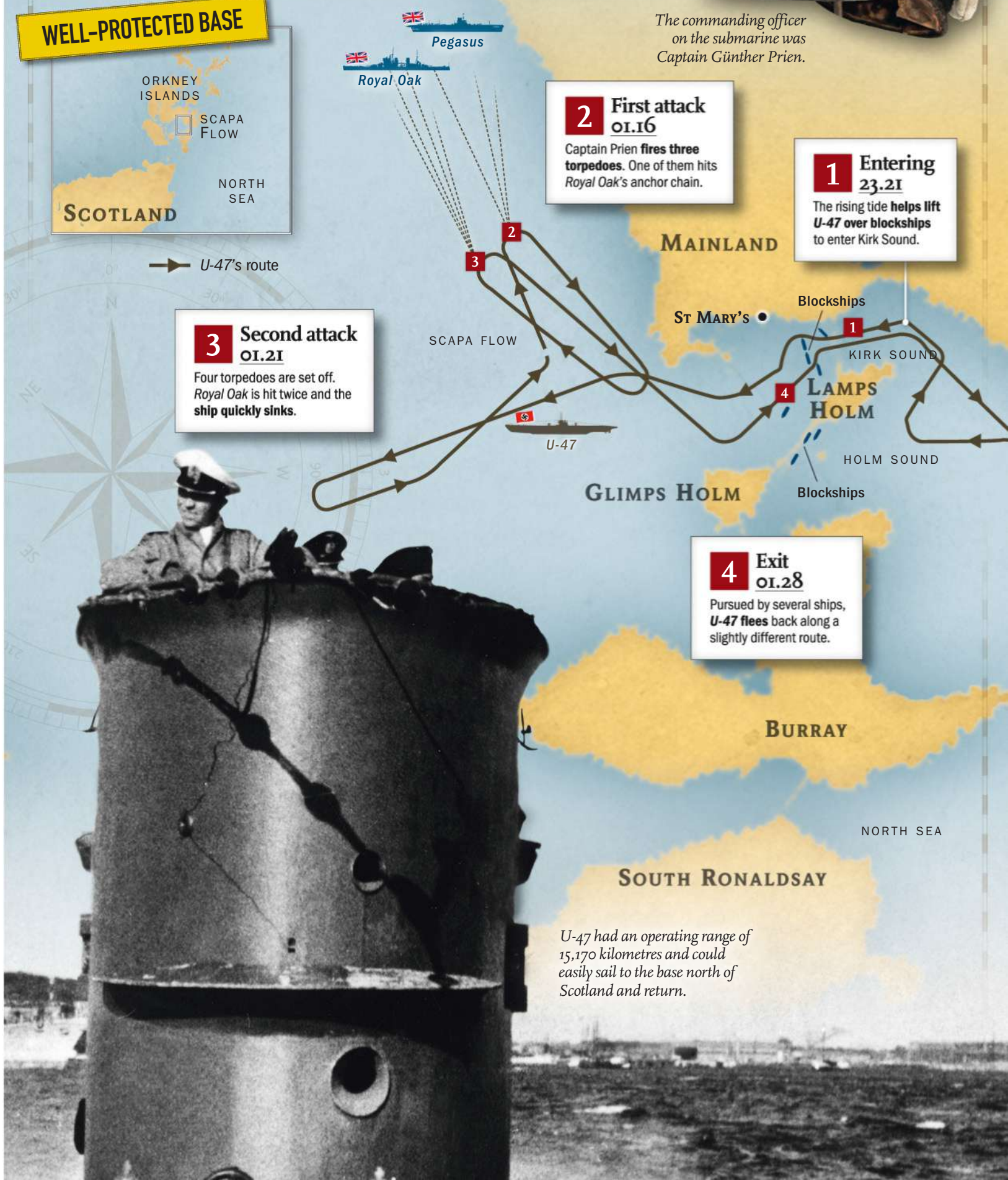
Captain Prien fires three torpedoes. One of them hits *Royal Oak*'s anchor chain.

1 Entering 23.21

The rising tide helps lift U-47 over blockships to enter Kirk Sound.

4 Exit 01.28

Pursued by several ships, U-47 flees back along a slightly different route.



U-47 had an operating range of 15,170 kilometres and could easily sail to the base north of Scotland and return.

1908-1941

NAME	GÜNTHER PRIEN
TITLE	SUBMARINE CAPTAIN

Jobless to people's hero

Günther Prien grew up in Leipzig with a mother who made a living by making lace. Childhood was characterised by poverty, and a 15-year-old Prien signed up to the German merchant navy. He became a deckhand on a freight ship, where everyday life was hard, with frequent fighting and lousy wages. But the young man endured his term and battled his way gradually through the hierarchy before graduating as a naval officer.

But no one would hire him, and through the bitterness of his broken dreams Prien volunteered to join the Nazi party. In 1933, Germany started to rebuild the German fleet and Prien grabbed the possibility of work in the war effort. After starting as a sailor, he quickly advanced through the ranks until ending up as a submarine captain.

The mission to Scapa Flow made Prien a national hero, and he quickly became known as one of Germany's submarine heroes. But his fame lasted briefly. On her 10th patrol in 1941, his submarine *U-47* was blown up by depth charges from the British destroyer *HMS Wolverine* and the entire crew perished.

- Graduated from naval school in 1932.
- Got his first submarine command in 1938.



virtually no people living along the coasts of both waters. Dönitz believed that Scapa Flow could be penetrated through Kirk Sound, helped by the tides that would ensure maximum water depth.

Now all he lacked were suitable men for the operation. The choice fell to Captain Günther Prien.

Since the outbreak of war, Prien had already sunk three English merchant ships and Dönitz recognised him as an ambitious, gifted and bold captain.

Prien was presented with the mission and considered the matter thoroughly before he giving his answer. The submarine crew was provided with charts and photographs with information from reconnaissance aircraft, reports from military intelligence and descriptions of previous assault attempts. Overnight, the captain studied the material, considered its possibilities, and made a preliminary plan for an attack before proudly accepting command of the mission the following morning.

SUBMARINERS TIED RAGS ON THEIR BOOTS

Prien chose to follow Dönitz's idea of almost floating into Scapa Flow on the high tide in the shallow Kirk Sound. He planned the mission for 13th October when there was a new moon, so darkness would hide the *U-47*.

On 8th October, ammunition and other necessities were loaded, and Prien secretly began his departure from Kiel. The crew of the *U-47* was helped by low pressure from Ireland – dark clouds swallowed up the meagre light from the stars and

camouflaged the German submarine's journey across the North Sea. After four days at sea, the submarine reached the Orkney Islands on 12th October, and Prien gave orders to dive. At 04.00 the next morning, the captain dropped his vessel to the seabed next to Scapa Flow.

Only now did he gather the crew and tell them about the mission. They were ordered to lie down and rest in order to save precious oxygen while *U-47* was submerged. No one could smoke or make unnecessary movements. The men wrapped rags on their boots, because the British monitors in Scapa Flow were so efficient that even a small kick against the hull's steel plates would be heard on the surface.

NORTHERN LIGHTS A PROBLEM

In the evening the men had their last meal. After the pork chops and green cabbage were demolished, the crew quietly cleaned up and made ready for battle. And finally at 19.00, Prien gave orders to head to the pumps. The submarine rose up slowly through the water

and the periscope scanned the horizon.

The night was dark and the sea empty. Assured that no enemies were nearby, the *U-47* surfaced and its diesel engines were started. The submarine slowly began to slide towards the coast, but suddenly a clear light spread across the horizon. An amazing Northern Lights display had lit up the sky over the North Sea, but none of the men enjoyed its beauty – darkness was crucial for the impending attack. Prien briefly considered postponing the mission for a day, but in his

833 men

out of 1,223 on board *HMS Royal Oak* were killed when the Germans sank the battleship. The attack led to greatly improved security in British sea ports.

opinion, the men were so prepared that he chose to take the chance instead of waiting another night on the seabed. Bathed in the glow of nature's own light show, the German submarine slowly slipped into Holm Sound – the easternmost entrance to Scapa Flow. Each time the shadow of a ship appeared in the distance, the *U-47* dived beneath the surface.

The many dives up and down tested the patience of both captain and crew. At the same time, the turning tide in the Orkney Islands made conditions erratic and unpredictable.

Next to Kirk Sound, things had very nearly gone wrong. Prien passed the blockship *Soriano* at a distance of only 15 metres. The tidal flow forced the submarine against *Soriano*, and just at that moment the captain spotted an anchor chain in front of them. The helm laid hard on the stern, but too late. With a screaming sound, the hull hit the seabed and the submarine became stuck.

Prien ordered a hard turn to port, and in one movement the submarine came free, slammed around the anchor chain and continued to move forward. The *U-47* was in Scapa Flow. Through the periscope, the captain searched the horizon, but to his great disappointment there was not a single enemy ship in sight.

CAPTAIN WAS IN SEARCH OF BIG GAME

The missing British ships were due to an error in the Germans' intelligence. A week earlier, the majority of the fleet's strength in Scapa Flow had been at sea, where the ships had been attacked by Luftwaffe. The attack had failed, but fear of a repeat show saw the British Navy sail to Loch Ewe in Western Scotland instead of heading back to Scapa Flow.

This knowledge had never been given to Prien. Still unaware of the reason for the disappearance of the fleet, the captain decided to search the bay more thoroughly and sail further westward. Half an hour after midnight he caught sight of a ship belonging to the Coast Guard, but the small vessel did not meet his ambition to hit an important military target. Prien started heading back east before ordering a

SUBMARINES DIVED AWAY FROM BRITISH BOMBS

8th October

11.00: departure from Kiel through the Kiel Canal.

9th October

All day immersed south of Dogger Bank.

10th October

During the daytime, submerged north of Dogger Bank.

13th October

04.37: static, 90 metres deep east of Scapa Flow while the crew rested.

23.31: to the surface and into Holm Sound. Runs aground in Kirk Sound, but gets back and continues into Scapa Flow.

14th October

0.55: turns up the coast and sees the battleships *HMS Royal Oak* and *HMS Pegasus* at an estimated distance of three kilometres.

01.16: fires three torpedoes.

01.21: another four torpedoes fired. Two are full hits.

01.28: full power to both engines. A southern route out of Kirk Sound is chosen, as the countercurrent and water depth makes it impossible to navigate the northern passage.

02.15: in open waters on southeastern course back towards base, followed by British ships.

06.30: forced to lay still, as the British drop depth charges.

15th October

06.00: submerged at 72 metres depth until twilight. Registers at least 32 depth-charge explosions.

17th October

11.00: sails in parade into fleet port Wilhelmshaven.





After the trip, U-47 returned to Wilhelmshaven, where the crew was greeted with kisses and flowers before...



... they went to Berlin, where Adolf Hitler personally handed Iron Cross medals to the crew of the U-47.

course north along the coast of the mainland. Here he finally found a target. In the U-47's periscope two battleships appeared, and he dropped anchor about three kilometres away. Further in the harbour were a number of destroyers, but Prien decided to quickly go for the big ships.

At 01.15, the crew of U-47 loaded four torpedoes into the sub's tubes. Two were aimed at the southernmost ship on the horizon, *HMS Royal Oak*, while the other two were intended for *HMS Pegasus* further north. With a slight tremor, three torpedoes were successfully fired while the last one stuck in the tube. After firing, Prien and his men waited as they counted down the seconds. Three and a half minutes later the first torpedo connected with the *Royal Oak*'s anchor chain and exploded, while the other two disappeared into the darkness of the water.

TORPEDO HIT THE SHIP'S WEAKEST POINT

Aboard the *Royal Oak* confusion reigned. Nobody dreamed that the battleship had just been hit by a German submarine. The crew believed that it was merely a minor

explosion – perhaps one of the ship's own bombs that had gone off by accident.

Prien was undeterred despite the failed attack and ordered another attempt. Five minutes later, all four torpedo tubes were ready for action. This time, two of the torpedoes hit *Royal Oak* in the middle of her hull. With a deafening sound they opened a hole nine metres wide in the ship's side. The battleship's ammunition store was probably hit because the power of the explosion was so great that parts of the torn hull were hurled into the water.

Royal Oak was doomed, and water gushed into the hull as the ship increasingly listed to one side. Just 13 minutes after the torpedo flared, the old warship disappeared into Scapa Sound's dark waters.

Prien ordered his crew to set course to exit the bay. Both engines were powered up, but before the submarine could make good its escape, problems arose.

U-BOAT FLED WITH BRITISH AT ITS HEELS

Prien had spent so long searching for ships in Scapa Flow, the tide had turned and the water depth in Kirk Sound was critically low – in some places to within three metres. The strong countercurrent knocked the 66-metre-long sub off course, again and again, and Prien realised that the U-47 could not get out of the narrow northern passage.

He headed for the wider southerly route out of Kirk Sound,

but the water depth here was even lower than in the north. The speed was lowered to 18 km/h while the submarine edged past the southernmost blockship close to shore.

Only a few centimetres separated the U-47 from bumping land on one side and colliding with the blockship on the other. The helm was pulled over hard and U-47 narrowly escaped striking the hard concrete.

By 02.15, the submarine reached open sea, followed by British destroyers and exploding depth charges, forcing the U-boat to sail rather than submerge.



THE FÜHRER REWARDED CREW PERSONALLY

Four days later, on 17th October at 11.00, the U-47 arrived at the naval base of Wilhelmshaven. The crew was met by Grand Admiral Erich Raeder and Commander Karl Dönitz before the trip continued to Berlin, where the Führer waited.

After a tribute in an open car through Berlin's streets, Hitler received Captain Prien and his crew for a gala dinner, where all were awarded the Iron Cross. It was Prien's proudest moment, but he quickly returned to Kiel to active service.

The captain had become famous and was widely acclaimed as one of the German Navy's submarine heroes. He also sank 30 Allied ships before being killed on 7th March, 1941.

A depth charge from British destroyer *Wolverine* destroyed the submarine's propeller making it so noisy that the destroyer could hear the U-47's position. All 45 crew members died after the bombing that sank Günther Prien's submarine.




The Nazis had the lead underwater

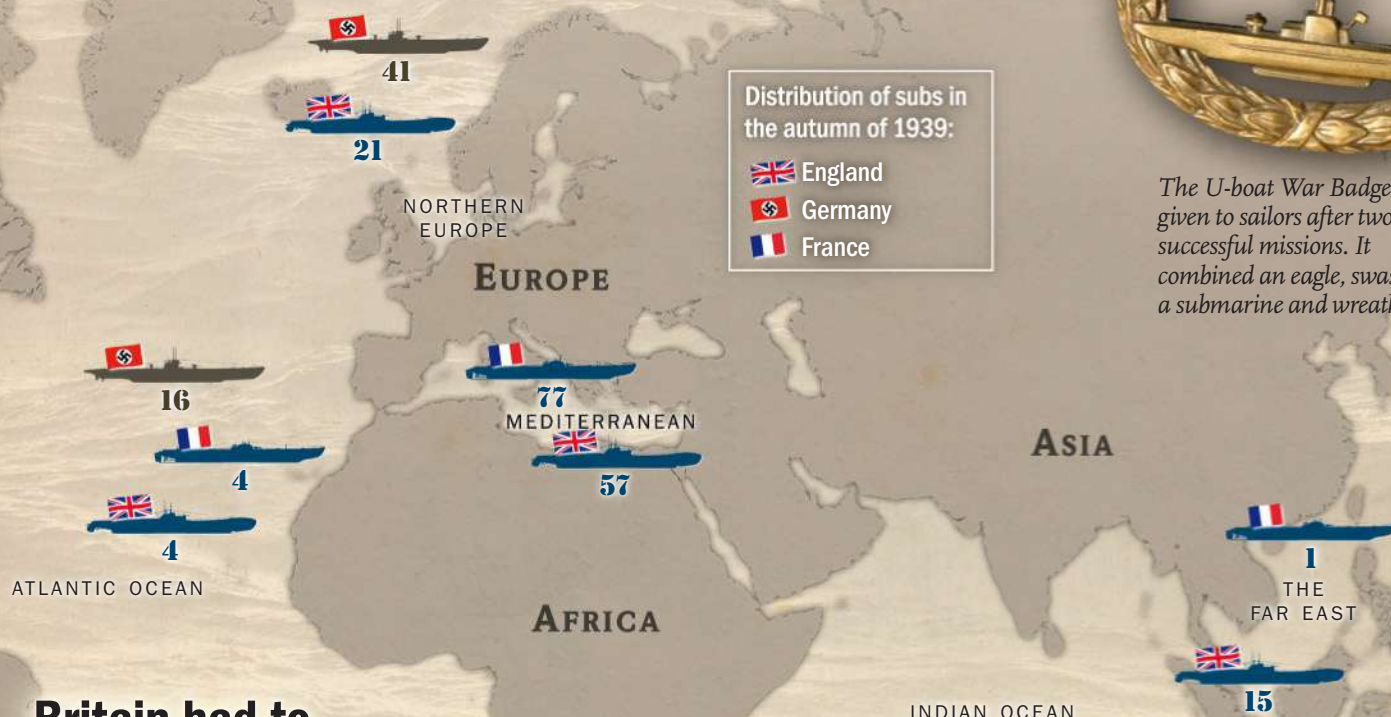
Germany may not have any submarines, dictated The Treaty of Versailles, signed after World War I. But after taking power in 1933, the Nazis immediately started building a large submarine fleet – the key to their dominance over Europe.



The U-boat War Badge was given to sailors after two successful missions. It combined an eagle, swastika, a submarine and wreath.

Distribution of subs in the autumn of 1939:

 England
 Germany
 France



Britain had to spread its fleet

According to a 1935 fleet agreement Germany did not have more submarines than Britain. But while the British had to distribute their fleet across the world to cover the empire, the Germans could focus theirs on Europe.

The fleet base in Wilhelmshaven in the North Sea was one of the most important to the German Kriegsmarine.





• • GLIDER SWOOP ON BELGIUM • •

SPECIAL FORCES CAPTURE BELGIAN FORT

On the morning of 10th May, 1940, German gliders land on the top of Belgium's strongest fortress, Eben-Emael. Only 10 minutes later, all the fort's guns explode into thin air and the invasion route into France is cleared.

1940

10TH MAY



The cannons on Fort Eben-Emael were destroyed before they could bomb the three bridges that the Germans needed.

THE STAGE IS SET



The German war machine is set to conquer France. But the road ahead needs to be cleared of any major obstacles. As German troops cross the River Meuse, the bridges across the river are guarded by guns at the Belgian fort Eben-Emael. The fort must be captured, even though military experts consider it impregnable.



THE GLIDER'S CANVAS CREAKED AND FLUTTERED. Eight men were seated tightly together on the narrow bench in the middle of the hull. They shared the sparse space with ammunition belts, machine guns and flame-throwers. Clamped along the side were the warheads that German researchers had spent over a year developing. Soon they would prove their worth.

Through the morning mist the pilot could make out the outline of the Belgian bunker system. He gave a signal, and the men in the plane tightened their grip. The glider bumped over the grass, its cabin shaking uncontrollably before the parachute brake took effect. With a violent judder, the plane stopped and stood completely silent on the grass lawn. Around the glider were large gun turrets. In the underground bunker, about 1,000 Belgian soldiers still slept safely.

Sergeant Hans Niedermeier immediately grabbed an explosive, ran out and stormed the gun's position as he'd been taught during

training in Czechoslovakia. It was 05.50 on Friday, 10th May. The attack on Eben-Emael was under way.

HITLER PLANNED A SPECIAL OPERATION

Seven months earlier in October 1939, Major General Kurt Student, head of Germany's airborne and air-landing troops, marched into a small room in Berlin clad with walnut-coloured panels. At the end of the room the Führer stood behind a large desk studying a detailed map.

The meeting between Hitler and the general was short. The Führer pointed to the Belgian fort Eben-Emael on the map and wanted to know whether it was possible to land gliders at the top of the fortress when the invasion of France, Belgium and the Netherlands began. Student asked for a day to report back.

No soldier had ever attacked with gliders – and never such a highly fortified and largely impenetrable fortress. On the other hand, Student was convinced of the ability of his paratroopers. The next day he confirmed that his soldiers could carry out the task – but only in daylight.

The general's word was enough for Hitler, who had personally devised the plan for the attack on the most important fort in Belgium, Eben-Emael. a paratrooper unit



For six months, the German Special forces trained to swiftly put the fortress' defences out of action.

New bomb led the way

During the attack on Eben-Emael German forces used shaped charged explosives for the first time – with deadly effect.

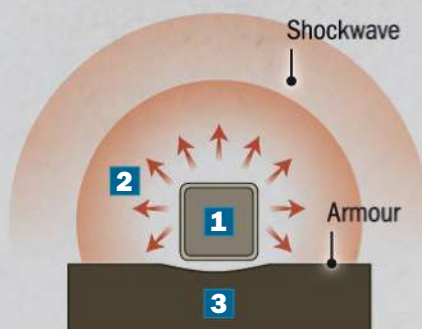
The thick walls of Eben-Emael were penetrated by a specially designed German weapon: shaped charged explosives.

During World War I, French concrete bunkers had survived everything thrown at them – even through persistent bombardment from German guns.

To avoid a repeat, Hitler wanted a weapon that could put a bunker out of action with a single explosion.

He had ordered German researchers to secretly develop a more efficient explosive charge. The new warheads charged the explosion in a single direction.

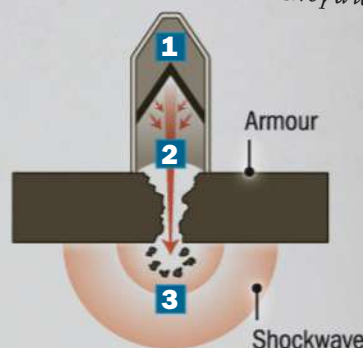
The result was a devastating pressure wave that effectively penetrated armour and concrete. The principle behind so-called “cavity explosions” is still used today in all armoured weapons.



Common explosive charge

- 1 The explosive charge is surrounded by metal.
- 2 The explosion is equally powerful in all directions.
- 3 Armour and concrete are only slightly damaged by the explosion.

The shaped charged explosive was used in the Panzer division from 1944, it could even destroy a tank.



Shaped explosive charge

- 1 The explosive is located at the top of the explosive charge.
- 2 A cavity is filled with air.
- 3 At the point of explosion, the power is channelled through the cavity and the shockwave breaks through the armour.

had to put the Belgian concrete fortress out of action before its heavy guns slowed the German march into Belgium.

The gliders were part of a bigger plan: more paratroopers would secure three important bridges across the border as the gliders were unleashed on the fortress.

SOLDIERS TRAINED FOR SIX MONTHS

In November 1939, training began for 85 selected paragliders. The soldiers were given the code name Group Granite and were divided into 11 smaller groups. Over the next six months they would be thrown together for an intensive training. The training was moved to Czechoslovakia. Here the paratroopers landed again and again on a faithful copy of Eben-Emael built into the Beneš Wall, the border fortifications begun by the Czechs prior to occupation. During the spring, pilots practised the small gliders' approach and landing in perfection.

At the same time, German researchers tested explosives using a new weapon: shaped charged explosives. The weapons project was so secret that Group Granite soldiers were not allowed to train with the new explosives. Instead, the groups handled dummy explosives as they perfected their attack on the machine-gun posts and heavy artillery of Eben-Emael.

The training continued until the groups could land on the one-square-kilometre fort and reach all their targets in less than 10 minutes. In early April 1940, Group Granite was called back to Germany.

Fall Gelb (Case Yellow) – the German invasion of Holland, Belgium and France – was imminent.

Early in the morning of 10th May, 1940, 11 Stuka bombers left the Ostheim air base near Cologne, each one towing a DFS 230 glider connected by

over 100 metres of steel wire. On board were the soldiers of Group Granite. Shortly after departure, things went wrong. Two of the planes became caught up in the tow ropes. The two pilots cut the wires immediately, and the gliders began a fast descent. Unfortunately, the raid's leader, Lieutenant Rudolf Witzig, was in one of them.

After an emergency landing near Cologne, Witzig leaped out from the door of the glider and sprinted in the dawn light over the fields before he stole a bicycle and later requisitioned a car. Crushed by the prospect of his men being defeated, the lieutenant continued at furious speed towards the Ostheim airfield where he collected a parachute while the crew prepared a new Stuka and DFS 230.

Four hours later, a relieved Witzig was with the group again. But by the time his glider landed at Eben-Emael at 08.00, the initial raid was long over.

GLIDERS FLOATED SILENTLY ACROSS BELGIUM

As the orders stipulated, the pilots in the other aircraft were still travelling westward – led by light flares from the ground.

After exactly 73 kilometres flying, 27 kilometres from Eben-Emael at 2.6 kilometres altitude, the pilots on the Stuka bombers loosened the wires. The gliders were



All mission officers were awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross by Hitler.

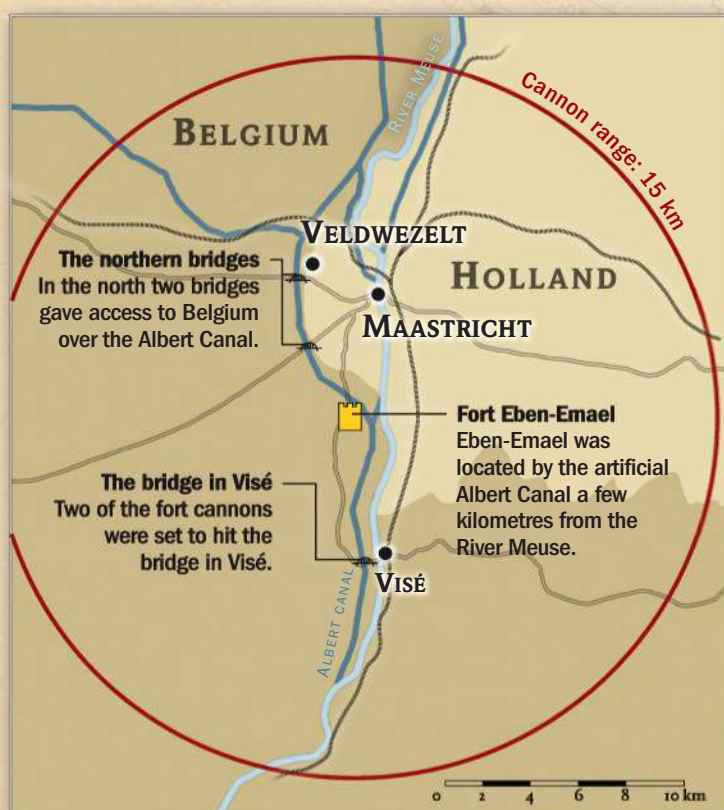
Groups quickly conquered fort

A total of 83 paratroopers in gliders would take part. The soldiers were divided into 11 groups, only nine came to battle. Group 2 had an emergency and returned to Germany and Group 11 was delayed along the way.



Belgium was on the German invasion route to France

Free access through Belgium was necessary for the German invasion of France. So the fortress on the River Meuse had to be captured.



Eben-Emael protected three bridges

The strongest fort in Belgium was designed for one purpose: preventing a German invasion. The fort was built at a high elevation, while to the east, the artificial Albert Canal made any frontal attack impossible. 1,000 soldiers defended the fortress. At short notice, they could man Eben-Emael's anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, but first and foremost, they operated the fortress's long-range 75-mm and 120-mm howitzers that could destroy the bridges over the Meuse.

A Anti-aircraft guns were first

Participants: Group 5
Target: anti-aircraft guns
 Group 5 was the first to land on the Eben-Emael fort shortly after 05.00. The pilot ploughed through the fortress's only anti-aircraft position so that the rest of the planes could land safely.

B Two big guns were destroyed

Participants: Groups 1, 2 and 3
Target: Maastricht cannons
 The groups blew up two important guns aimed at the two bridges to the north. Only Groups 1 and 3 took part as Group 2 were forced to make an emergency landing.

Anti Tank Pit
 A five-metre deep pit around Eben-Emael should stop enemy tanks.

Observation post

C Group had double task

Participants: Group 8
Target: Gun positions
 The group had two primary targets: two 75-mm cannon positions in the northern part of the fort. After the guns were blown up, the paratroopers targeted the observation post Bloc 4.

Two fake gun positions

E

MI-Sud
 Machine gun block was captured by group 9.

Albert Canal was built to create a defence against the Germans. At Eben-Emael the canal had a drop of 40 metres down to the water.

MI-Nord
Machine gun emplacements, that could protect the inside of the fort.

Visé 1
The cannon targeted the bridge at Visé.

D

C

A

Bloc 4
The observation post was taken by Group 8.

B

Anti-aircraft defences
The Belgian Army did not count on an attack from the air, so the fort was only equipped with a single anti-aircraft position with four machine guns.

Maastricht 1
The cannon was trained on the northern bridges.

Maastricht 2
The cannon was focused on the northern bridges.

Administration building

Cupola South
The cannons were destroyed here in the afternoon.

D Goal: cannon and machine guns

■ **Participants:** Groups 4, 10 and 11

■ **Target:** Visé cannons

Group 4 took the MI-Nord machine gun block that protected the inside of the fort. At the same time, Group 10 destroyed the cannon at Visé 1, which protected the bridge at Visé. Group 11 was delayed and arrived at 08.00.

Albert Canal

Fort's anti-tank pit

German aerial photographs revealed the fortress's cannon positions and machine gun emplacements.

Nine German gliders circled silently down over the fort in the morning.

E The guns were fake

■ **Participants:** Groups 6, 7 and 9

■ **Target:** Gun emplacements

Air observations showed two guns in the northwest corner, though during the attack Groups 6 and 7 found out that the cannons were fake. Group 9 captured the MI-Sud machine gun position.

Armed with explosives and flame throwers the Germans took the Belgian fort.



The German army was the first to train and use paratroopers.



Pilots in Luftwaffe Junker aircraft wore gold badges with an eagle and swastika.

left hanging in the air over Germany to begin their silent glide across the Belgian border at 124 km/h.

"There was a light ground mist, through which the outlines of the fortification could be dimly perceived", recalled Helmut Wenzel, divisional officer, describing the seconds just before landing.

In the fortress, a guard observing from the anti-aircraft position was astonished by the silent aircraft that circled down to the fortress through the morning mist.

In an instant, total confusion spread among the Belgian guards. Machine gun fire only scattered bullets as the Belgians were unsure whether the planes were British or German. Only when one of the aircraft's wings plunged through anti-aircraft artillery positions injuring a man, did the truth strike the Belgian soldiers. Eben-Emael was under German attack.

A few seconds later, the four soldiers found themselves staring into the barrels of two German machine guns. They threw their weapons on the ground and raised their hands.

EBEN-EMAEL WAS CONQUERED IN 10 MINUTES

Group 5 had completed its task. Over the next 10 minutes, Group Granite fully realised the effect of their new shaped charged explosives. Eben-Emael's thick concrete walls and powerful guns were quickly and efficiently broken down by the targeted explosions.

Sergeant Niedermeier, who first triggered a charge, described the effect on an observation bunker: "We could see that the gun had been torn from its mounting [and] lay like a crumpled matchbox in the corner. The opening was 60 cm x 60 cm so it was big enough for anyone to climb in easily".

Beside the blasted cannon lay dead and injured Belgian soldiers. The picture was the same throughout the fort. The many months of training had paid dividends. Professionally, those involved with Group Granite destroyed their designated targets. And before Eben-Emael's heavy cannons could fire one shot, the German paratroopers had destroyed them and the other outside positions at the fort.

SOLDIERS BARRICADED THEMSELVES IN

The Belgians who survived the explosions fled into the fort's underground corridors. Here they were effectively safe from the Germans, but had also locked themselves in. The elite German troops could easily lay siege to the few outposts of the bunker's complex. For the next 28 hours, the Germans held Eben-Emael while Belgian defenders were isolated in the fort's interior.

From the observation points, the paratroopers could see column after column of German lorries, crews and tanks roll west across the cleared border. And on the evening of 11th May, the German army's commanders sent a telegram to Hitler:

"... Eben-Emael, which dominates crossings over the Meuse River and the Albert Canal near and west of Maastricht, surrendered on Saturday afternoon. 1,000 men taken prisoner".



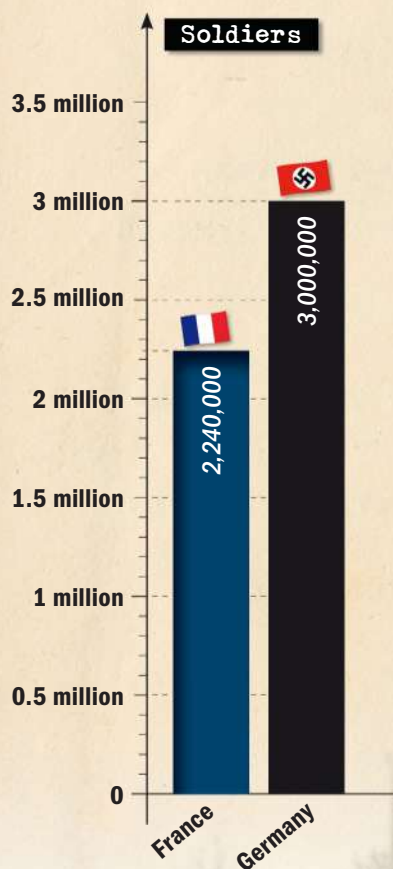
The Germans were set for Blitzkrieg against France

With the conquest of Eben-Emael and Belgium on May 10, 1940 the way was open for German forces to continue their Blitzkrieg, fast and overwhelming attacks using tanks and aircraft against France.

The rapid victory in Belgium gave the Germans a psychological edge, but their military superiority in the air was the Nazis' biggest advantage. Their dominance was not just down to sheer weight of numbers – many French aircraft were outdated. The French, on the other hand, had more tanks – an advantage that their army did not fully utilise. Unlike the Germans, they did not group their tanks in large units that could overwhelm anything and anyone.

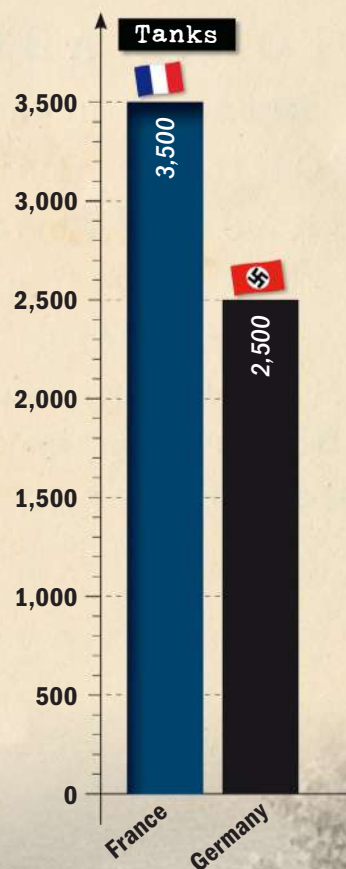


Germans had the most soldiers and aircraft



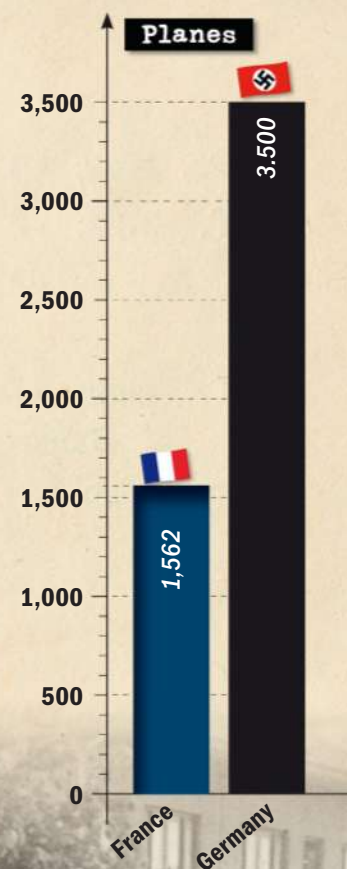
Soldiers were superior

Germany had a big army and its troops were well-trained.



Tanks used incorrectly

French tanks were usually allocated to other units.



Luftwaffe was superior

In the air, the new German Luftwaffe held sway.

German tanks were organised into special armoured divisions that had great impact.

The surviving Belgian Eben-Emael soldiers were led into captivity by the Germans.

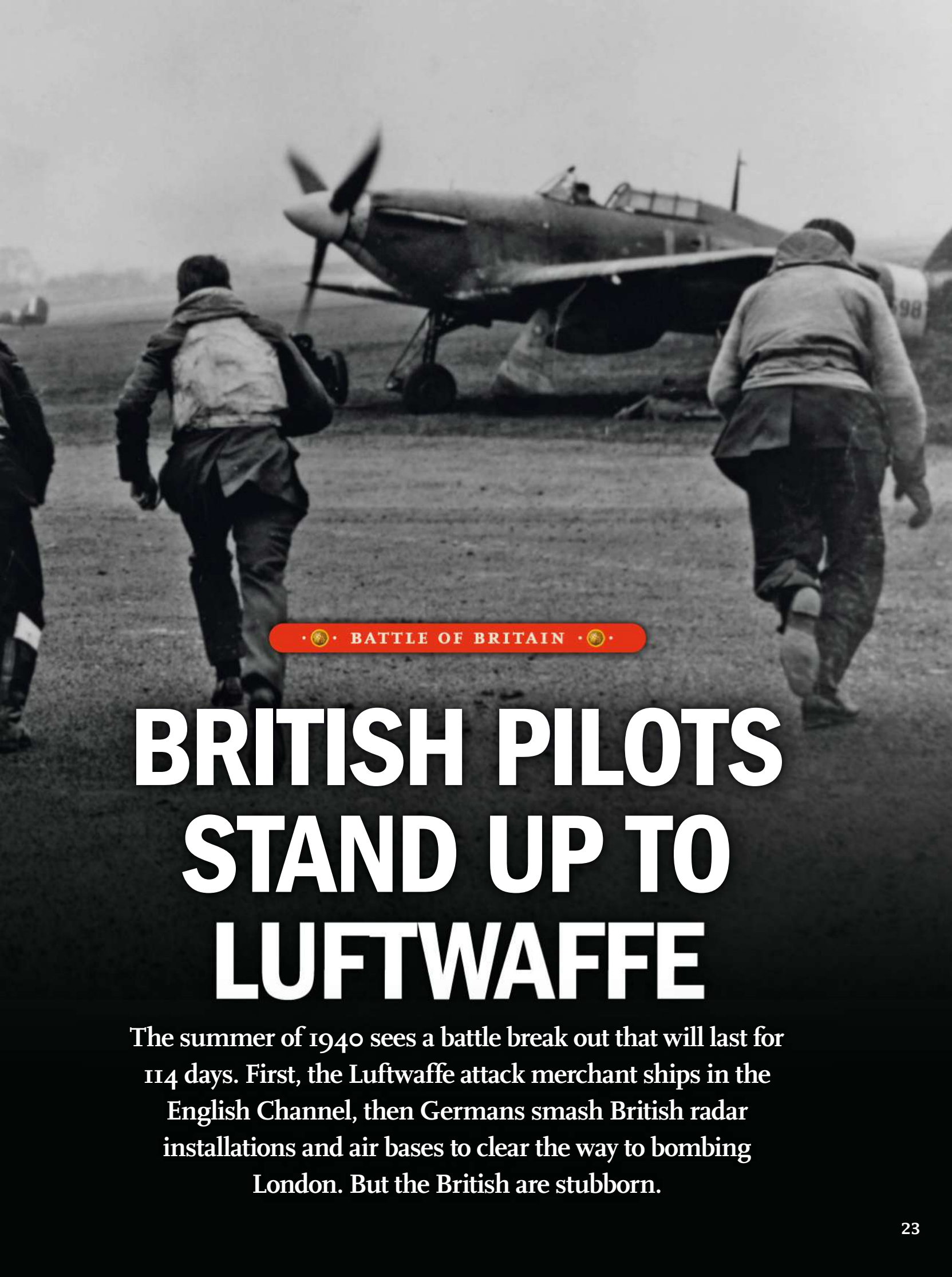


British pilots were always ready. When they saw a German plane as a blip on a radar screen, Spitfires were in the air in as little as 10 minutes.



1940

10TH JULY



• 🌟 • BATTLE OF BRITAIN • 🌟 •

BRITISH PILOTS STAND UP TO LUFTWAFFE

The summer of 1940 sees a battle break out that will last for 114 days. First, the Luftwaffe attack merchant ships in the English Channel, then Germans smash British radar installations and air bases to clear the way to bombing London. But the British are stubborn.

THE STAGE IS SET

At the beginning of June 1940, Hitler's army occupy France at lightning speed. The Germans only need to defeat Britain before all of Western Europe is in their grasp. The British stubbornly refuse to surrender, however – not least the Royal Air Force, a far more dangerous enemy than the Germans had anticipated.



AFTER A GREY AND RAINY MORNING, the sun shone again over Dover's white cliffs on Wednesday, 10th July, 1940. The rays sparkled on the water as a convoy of cargo ships passed. The vessels looked like small toy ships placed in an idyllic model landscape. It was a beautiful summer day in southern England.

But fighter pilot John Thompson did not have time to enjoy the view from his cockpit. His eyes were trained firmly on a formation of German bombers that approached with deadly intent, ready to drop their deadly explosives on to the convoy. While anti-aircraft guns fired from the beach below, Thompson took charge of 12 Hurricane fighters and flew directly towards the enemy planes. The two formations approached each other at a combined speed of 900 km/h.

Suddenly the bombers turned and took flight. Thompson followed, took aim and fired his aircraft's machine guns. One enemy aircraft crashed into the ocean leaving a trail of smoke behind it. From the beach, local residents watched as the combatants swarmed around each other.

This scary scene was the first significant incident in what would become known as the "Battle of Britain". The conflict was history's first major air battle, and the 114-day onslaught would not only be crucial to Britain maintaining air superiority over its own shores, but would mark a turning point in WWII. Until

63 schools

trained pilots for the Luftwaffe in 1940. The German air force possessed about 5,000 highly trained pilots who could be sent into the skies over Britain.

now, 1940 had been intoxicating for Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. In April, German troops had effortlessly taken Denmark and Norway, and in May, Holland, Belgium and France fell too. The United States had remained neutral and the Soviet Union was willingly cooperating with the Germans.

Only Britain now stood in the way of a Europe united under the swastika. The question was: how long could she hold out?

British troops had been stationed in France since the war broke out in September 1939, but in the summer of 1940, Hitler's apparently unstoppable army had pushed the British back to the Dunkirk beaches, from which they were evacuated at the last minute before being pushed into the sea. Thousands of weapons and trucks as well as several tons of ammunition and fuel were left on the beaches. It was a military disaster for Britain, who was left on the brink of collapse.

"Final victory over England is now only a matter of time", concluded Germany's Chief of Staff Alfred Jodl.

CHANNEL'S FREIGHT SHIPS WERE THE TARGET

The killer blow against Britain was to have been an invasion, code-named "Operation Sea Lion". The plan was based on the principle of Blitzkrieg, the combination of infantry, tank and air bombardments that had brought the Germans success throughout Europe. Hitler, however, had no illusions about

NAME **HERMANN GÖRING**
TITLE REICH MARSHAL

Airman became supreme commander

A former airman from WWI, fighter pilot Hermann Göring was Hitler's right-hand man from 1933. Göring created the Gestapo, but left it to Heinrich Himmler in 1935 in favour of a job as commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe. After the Germans' lightning victory in 1939-40, Göring was made supreme commander of the entire Wehrmacht – a position he kept throughout war – and was also Hitler's deputy.

- > Given Grand Cross of the Iron Cross.
- > Committed suicide in prison.



NAME **HUGH DOWDING**
TITLE AIR MARSHAL

War veteran countered Hitler's plan

Hugh Dowding had been a fighter pilot in World War I, and was appointed head of the Royal Air Force in 1936. In addition to managing the RAF at the beginning of World War II, he was also the architect of an integrated air defence system. It included a messaging system whereby radar observations were promptly analysed and passed on to the RAF, which took to the air as soon as an observation was verified as a genuine attack.

- > Retired from the RAF in 1942.
- > Was made a baron in 1943.





The Royal Air Force was established in 1918 as an independent unit and is the world's oldest air force.

the task ahead. Since the battle of Hastings in 1066, no one had managed to cross the Channel and invade Britain. His only option was to get rid of the Royal Air Force (RAF), otherwise the fleet and army would have no chance of making a landing on UK soil.

The Nazis transferred bombers and fighters to newly built bases in northern France and began bombing raids against freight ships in the English Channel. The Germans gave these initial manoeuvres the name "Kanalkampf", their purpose being to cut off Britain's supply lines and to destroy as many British aircraft as possible.

Many of the German pilots had served in Legion Condor, a unit that fought for the fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Here they were trained and developed a loose formation flight that was better suited to fighting other fighters than the traditional V-formation the British used. With new tactics, combat-driven pilots and newly built aircraft, the German Luftwaffe ought to have been superior.

CHURCHILL: "WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER"

Although Hitler and his staff planned Operation Sea Lion to the smallest detail, they expected that a real military invasion would not be necessary. Hitler believed that the British were in a "hopeless military situation", and he considered that they would only need to be pushed a little before they surrendered and signed a peace agreement on German terms.

Much had changed since October 1938, however, when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had signed the Munich Treaty with the German dictator and hope was for "peace in our time". The office now belonged to Winston Churchill who had taken over the post the same day as Nazi troops had entered France, and he was not intimidated. Britain will "fight to the bitter end. We will never surrender", he declared when the last British troops left Dunkirk.

AGGRESSIVE TACTICS SURPRISED THE GERMANS

The Luftwaffe was surprised to be met with fierce and dogged opposition over the English Channel. At this time, the RAF ran over 600 modern fighters. The Germans had almost double that number. In spite of Britain's unquestionable inferiority in both men and machines, they took down 10 German aircraft on the first day of the battle for the loss of only two planes.

With their modern fighters, the British were a more equal opponent than the poorly equipped air forces that the German pilots had been up against until now. In addition, the British had the advantage that German fighters had to use precious fuel to cross the Channel and fight over enemy territory. It only gave them a short time in action before they had to – if they could – return home.

In the bitter fighting that followed, one of the British squadrons developed a bold tactic. Instead of flying over the German bombers and turning to attack from behind, they flew directly towards the German aircraft while firing their machine guns. The attack tactics gave the British better vision and forced the frightened German pilots to

turn the plane upward to avoid a collision. This made them even easier targets for British pilots. But the tactics were also dangerous, and in several cases, RAF fighters collided with German aircraft.

For almost a month, German attacks continued on British ships and ports. And although British fighters tried to protect the convoys, many cargo ships with vital supplies were sunk. Losses in the air were high on both sides, but the RAF accounted for most "kills"; between 10th and 23rd July, the British lost 45 aircraft to the Luftwaffe's 82.

The skill of the RAF pilots came as a surprise to the Germans who realised that they had to change strategy: From now on everything was focussed on destroying the Royal Air Force, its bases, aircraft and other equipment. Head of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring, threw himself into

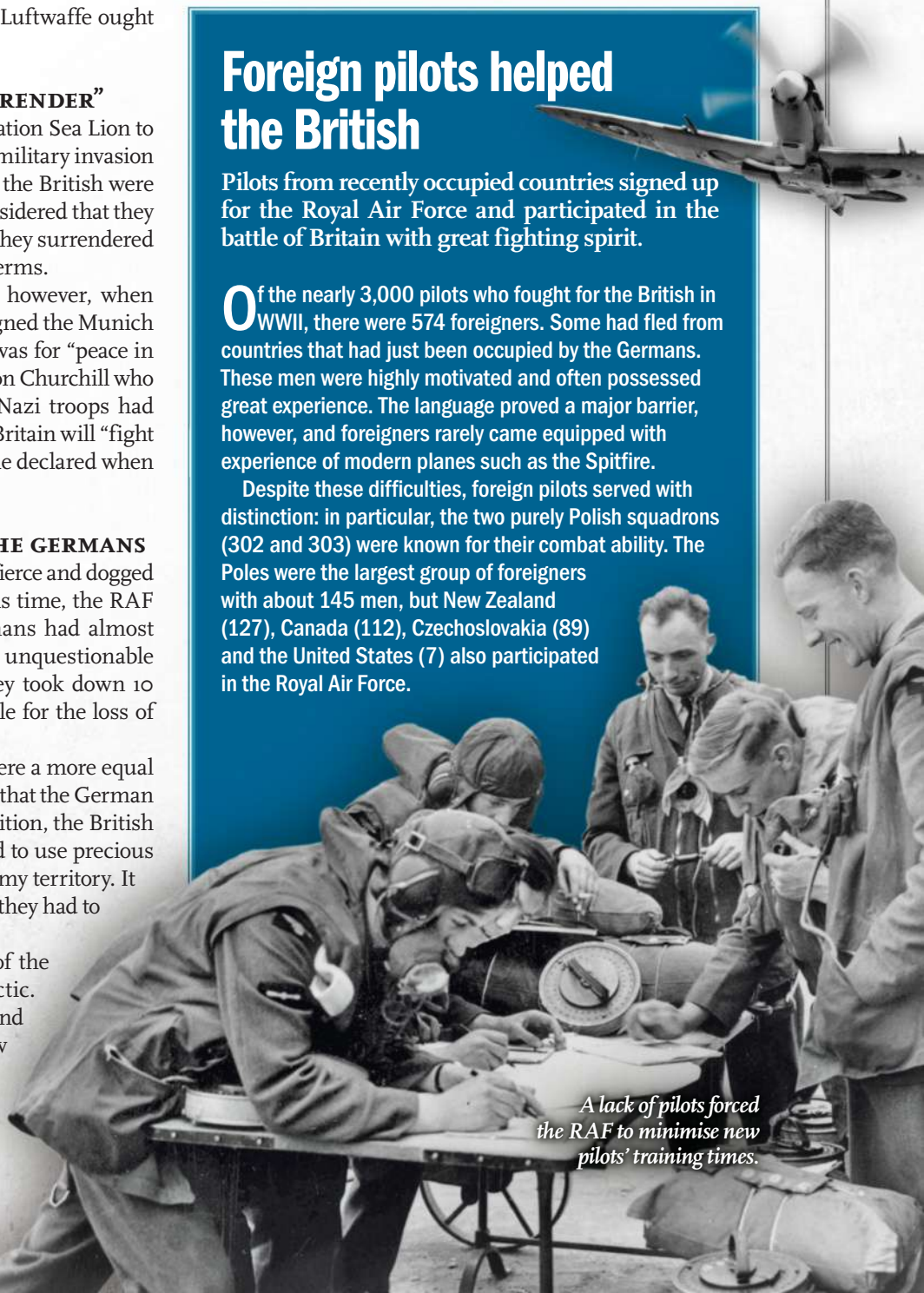
Foreign pilots helped the British

Pilots from recently occupied countries signed up for the Royal Air Force and participated in the battle of Britain with great fighting spirit.

Of the nearly 3,000 pilots who fought for the British in WWII, there were 574 foreigners. Some had fled from countries that had just been occupied by the Germans. These men were highly motivated and often possessed great experience. The language proved a major barrier, however, and foreigners rarely came equipped with experience of modern planes such as the Spitfire.

Despite these difficulties, foreign pilots served with distinction: in particular, the two purely Polish squadrons (302 and 303) were known for their combat ability. The Poles were the largest group of foreigners with about 145 men, but New Zealand (127), Canada (112), Czechoslovakia (89) and the United States (7) also participated in the Royal Air Force.

A lack of pilots forced the RAF to minimise new pilots' training times.



FIGHTERS

Fighter plane was better equipped

The German Messerschmitt-fighter was both faster and better armed than the British Spitfire, but the Spitfire's advantage over the Messerschmitt was its remarkable manoeuvrability.

Both the British Spitfire and German Messerschmitt Bf 109 belonged to a new generation of combat aircraft. Germany developed the Bf 109 immediately after Hitler came to power in 1933, while the first Spitfire went into the air the following year in reaction to Germany's rearming. The two machines were almost

equal although the Bf 109 was faster. The Germans had the advantage: in addition to two machine guns mounted on the hull, Messerschmitts carried two 20-mm machine guns in its wings. The Spitfire only had 8-mm machine guns (four machine guns in each wing).

Messerschmitt could fly higher

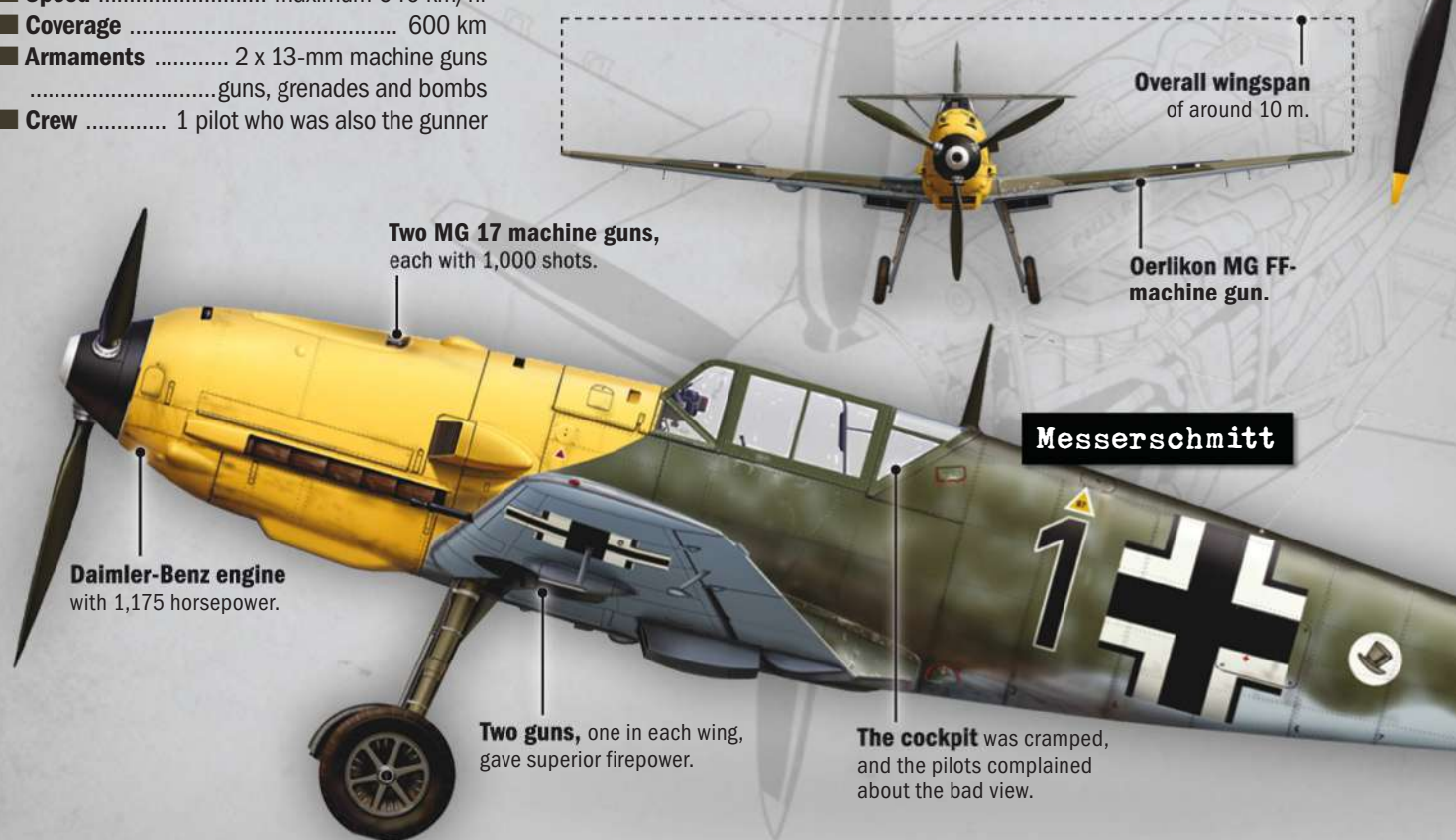
Range was a challenge during the Battle of Britain. With a full tank, a Messerschmitt Bf 109 could fly 600 kilometres, which only gave it 10 minutes flight time over London before having to return. On the other hand, the Bf 109 could fly higher than British planes.

- **Take-off weight**..... maximum 3,400 kg
- **Speed** maximum 640 km/hr
- **Coverage** 600 km
- **Armaments** 2 x 13-mm machine guns
.....guns, grenades and bombs
- **Crew** 1 pilot who was also the gunner

BEST ENGINE

FACT

■ The direct injection Daimler-Benz engine provided the Bf 109 with an even supply of fuel during violent manoeuvres that the Spitfire's engine couldn't match.



the task with zeal: "The Führer has ordered me to crush Britain with my Luftwaffe", he declared proudly.

GERMANS ATTACKED RADAR STATIONS

"Adlerangriff" (Operation Eagle Attack) was the code name of the series of raids designed to break the RAF, and the first came on 12th August, when a group of German bombers attacked radar stations on the south coast of England. Britain's

radar system was one of the RAF's greatest assets. The attack knocked out several radar stations, and a few hours later, Germans sent about 220 bombers and fighters from southern Germany to bomb RAF air bases.

After a few hours the radar system was operational once again. The following day a fresh wave of bombers swept over the bases and more devastation followed. Both hangars and the planes inside were destroyed, workshops were levelled to



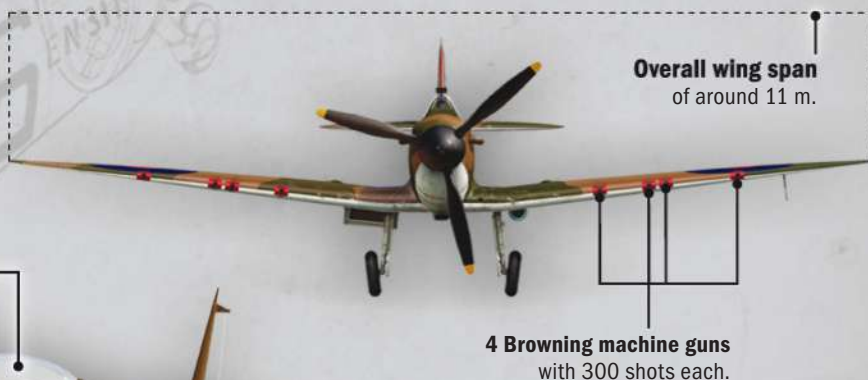
Spitfire was the sky's acrobat

Rapid twists and turns in the air were the Spitfire's strength. The aircraft's wings were elliptical, resulting in great aerodynamics and manoeuvrability. If forced, the Spitfire could shake off its pursuant by rolling half a turn and then pulling out quickly from the subsequent dive.

- **Take-off weight** maximum 2,651 kg
- **Speed** 560 km/hr
- **Coverage** 668 km
- **Armaments** 8 x 7.69-mm machine guns
- **Crew** 1 pilot who was also the gunner



Goggles protected fighter pilots' eyes – for example, if the window in the cockpit was broken.



Overall wing span
of around 11 m.

4 Browning machine guns
with 300 shots each.

The vaulted dome gave the pilot a good view, also backwards.

Rolls-Royce Merlin engine
with 1,030 horsepower.

The machine guns, four in each wing, did not outweigh the Messerschmitt guns.

Cockpit protected with steel plates in the bottom and the back.

Spitfire



German fighter aircraft had the task of protecting the hundreds of bombers that were sent across to Britain and who didn't have enough firepower to defend themselves.



the ground and telephone systems put out of service. Runways were struck by bombs and left useless. Göring was convinced that the British only had about 450 fighters left and that the final conflict could be fought in a couple of weeks.

AVIATION INDUSTRY WAS GIVEN PRIORITY

In fact, the British aircraft factories had made sure that the RAF still had over 700 operational fighters. Churchill had

foreseen an air strike and already set up a separate ministry for aerospace production in May.

The ministry ensured that the whole of the British economy and industry were switched to war production and aerospace was given priority over virtually all raw materials.

Private industries, not least the automotive industry, also contributed by providing equipment and assisting with the operation of state-owned aircraft factories. »

The manufacture of planes in Britain grew at record pace, while the Germans, who did not give their own aerospace priority, began to ease up production. From June to September 1940, Germany built 775 new Messerschmitt aircraft, while Britain sent no fewer than 1,900 new fighters into the air – almost triple the number. It was Britain's huge production of fighters that would eventually break Göring's Luftwaffe.

In mid-August, the Germans began to concentrate attacks on the main RAF air bases, including Tangmere on the south coast and Kenley and Biggin Hill just southeast of London. During the last two weeks of August, Biggin Hill was bombed almost daily.

LUFTWAFFE KILLED RAF'S BEST PILOTS

For several weeks, British pilots at Biggin Hill were sent up against the attacking German fighters. Exhaustion after many days of no sleep began to sap at their concentration and fighting ability. The same was true at many of

the other bases. On 15th August alone, the Luftwaffe made 2,200 bombing raids on British bases. In order to spare personnel at the hardest hit bases, RAF Command began to move people around.

Spitfire pilot Hugh Dundas, along with his colleagues from 616 Squadron,

was sent to Kenley to replace their hard-tested colleagues. After lunch, they drove in a raucous mood on the way to Kenley and "eager to take off for ... glory". They were met with a shocking sight: the base was ruined and the area overloaded with wrecks and bomb craters. The pilots nodded in acknowledgement when Prime Minister Churchill concluded at the end of August that "never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few".

At the same time, it was clear that the RAF was on the brink of collapse. The bases were in sad repair and the effects of relentless warfare could be felt. On 24th August Manston, a base on the southeast coast, was virtually levelled by 20 Ju-88 bombers. After that, the base was closed and only served as an emergency landing ground. At the beginning of September, six out of seven bases belonging to Group 11 – the Jagger Group, which was defending London – were almost wiped out.

A corps of flight observers watched all flights across England from July 1940 – 24 hours a day every day of the week.

The Hurricane

was a British workhorse in the air. The fighter plane was not as fast as the Spitfire but with a metal skeleton covered with canvas it was easier to produce.

At the same time, British fighters were shot down at an alarming rate. Within two weeks – from 26th August to 6th September – the RAF lost 273 aircraft, and although factories were operating under high pressure, production could not keep up.

More disastrous was the loss of pilots. Every week the RAF lost about 120 pilots. After only 10 days at Kenley, Dundas had lost most of his colleagues from 616 Squadron's original roster of 12: five were killed or missing in battle and five were injured. At the beginning of the Battle of Britain, the RAF only trained 65 pilots a week, at the same time losing an average of 120. Finally, the shortage of pilots became so desperate that new recruits only received four weeks of training.

HITLER ORDERED LONDON BOMBING

The new, fast-tracked pilots were far less effective than their older colleagues. Records detailing the pilots' victories showed that 80 percent of enemy aircraft shot down were down to only 10 percent of pilots – the most experienced ones.

Many of the new pilots were simply sent into the air with only the most basic knowledge of planes. They had not learned how to operate the aircraft's machine guns and only a few people learned to fly in formation. Therefore the new planes often dropped away from the formation and were easy prey for German fighters.

At RAF headquarters, command realised that the air force would probably collapse if the Germans continued their current strategy.

Although the Germans, like the British, lost many planes and pilots, they were pleased that Luftwaffe was slowly but surely winning the battle.

"The RAF is done as a fighting force", a Luftwaffe officer proudly stated. Hitler, however, became impatient.

In retaliation to German bombers accidentally attacking London, the British began bombing Berlin. The reprisals infuriated Hitler, because the Nazis had promised the German people that Berlin would never be attacked. At the same time, he needed a change in strategy that would provoke the long-awaited surrender, so he could turn his attention to the Soviet Union. Rotterdam and Warsaw had shown what massive bombings could do to a city – now it was London's turn.

Nearly 1,000 German aircraft participated in the first wave, late in the afternoon on 7th September. The bombs hit the docks where an explosion in a gasworks sent a big fireball into the air. The whole area was in flames. An ammunition depot and a residential area were also hit. 306 were killed.

"Explosions were everywhere, there just was not a break, bang after bang after bang", one Londoner recalled. "The clang of bells from fire service vehicles and ambulances were drowned out by these bombs. ... God, this seemed to go on for hours".

The Luftwaffe bombed London daily for almost two months. Hardest hit from the Blitz – which the attacks were popularly referred to – were the homes in London's poor East End.

BRITONS WERE STRONG AND UNITED

East Enders were forced into crowded and dirty shelters without toilets or sanitation. The government deliberately refused to build large, comfortable shelters as it dreaded the



British radar could see all the way to France

Both the UK and Germany used primitive radar. But, contrary to the German system, the British radar system was connected to the so-called Chain Home system, which made it highly efficient.

From the east coast of Scotland to the west coast of Wales 29 radar stations with high radar signals “bombed” the space in front of them with radio waves to detect planes. The system had a range of over 80 km, so the British were aware from the moment a group of German aircraft lifted off from their bases in northern France. Radar determined

the hostile aircraft’s distance, altitude and speed. To prevent the enemy flying under the radar, low-level systems were developed that could detect aircraft at lower altitudes, albeit at limited range. Once the planes reached land, they were followed with binoculars. In cloud, observers used the aircraft’s engine noise to judge course and height.

British radar masts were very efficient, but could only “look” forwards.



idea that people would want to stay in them permanently. If daily life ground to a halt, morale would fall, the argument went. For the same reason, the government asked the press to write about parties and party gatherings in London and Churchill raged when he heard that well-off families had sent their children out of the city.

More out of necessity than pleasure did the hard-pressed residents of the East End continue with their daily routine as normally as possible. Over time, their disrupted day found

a new rhythm. Housewives used the queue for rationed goods to exchange tips on how to make meat and vegetables last throughout the week while gossiping about who had now been “bombed out” of their homes.

Folk came together in basements and on underground platforms during raids where they waited for the “All Clear” signal to sign that the attack had blown over – for now.

Even though casualties were high and the inhabitants were exhausted through lack of sleep and rations, the heavy bombing of the English capital did not have the desired

impact that Hitler had wanted. It could not break the British. After the first night's attacks, American journalist Edward Murrow wrote:

"This night bombing is serious and sensational. It makes headlines, kills people and smashes property, but it doesn't win wars ... [and] will not cause this country to collapse."

RAF GOT A MUCH-NEEDED BREAK

Murrow had read the situation correctly. The shift from bombardment of air bases to civilian areas gave the RAF much-needed breathing room. Bases were repaired, pilot numbers regained strength, and industry could again meet the demand for new aircraft. On 15th September, when the Luftwaffe arrived over London for what would be a decisive battle, the air over the city filled with Spitfire and Hurricane fighters.

The day was an unmitigated disaster for the Luftwaffe. A furious Göring said that his fighters had "let him down".

Two days later, Hitler's Operation Sea Lion was postponed indefinitely. The nightly bombings of London continued over



Ankle straps held the pilot's boots on their feet – also on the way down by parachute.

the coming months, but in fact, Germany effectively lost the Battle of Britain on 15th September. The attacks on London eased off after October, but did not stop completely until May 1941. By then the Blitz had taken more than 20,000 lives in London alone. Large parts of the city were totally devastated, and other cities across Britain were also affected. In total, civilian casualties across the UK ran to about 43,000 killed and 46,000 injured.

Britain's morale and self-belief was boosted by the confrontation with the Luftwaffe. She was the first country to have resisted the modern German war machine – Hitler was not invincible after all. Of course, Britain continued to be blockaded by German submarines, warships and bombers who cut off the country from supplies, but she was a fortress that had once again resisted an attempted invasion. With Churchill at the helm and sensible rationing of food and fuel, the British could last for a long time.

Three years later, bombers came in their thousands again over southern Germany, only this time their targets were German cities...

London's volunteers worked night after night

A combination of voluntary fire workers, barrage balloons and British anti-aircraft guns kept up the morale of London's beleaguered citizens.

"Send all the bloody pumps you've got – the whole world's on fire", the message sounded when the first German bombs hit London's docks in the afternoon of 7th September. At the beginning of the Blitz in the autumn of 1940, the city's volunteer fire service numbered 25,000, many of them women.

In order to protect particularly vulnerable targets, the British set up barrage balloons. The large, silver-coloured balloons and their steel cables prevented bombers from flying at low altitude, making it difficult to make an exact hit. Anti-

Despite violent daily bombings, Londoners continued their daily lives as best they could.



aircraft guns were set up where powerful night-time lights helped the shooters. They weren't particularly effective, but the sound of the air protection guns contributed to a feeling of safety and helped reinforce morale.



The London Fire Service worked 24 hours a day to put out the many fires in the city.

Losses clipped Luftwaffe's wings

The 114-day battle in the skies over England cost the German Luftwaffe around half of its planes. Losses especially hit the large Heinkel bomber, which the Germans had difficulty replacing.

As one historian has said the Battle of Britain was, "one of the most significant moments in history". The RAF prevented not only an invasion of Britain, but convinced the United States that she was a trustworthy partner for an alliance.

What was significant was that the RAF delivered an emphatic defeat to the Luftwaffe. The many downed German bombers put a damper on the German war effort for a long time to come. Where the British just produced new planes to replace lost ones, the hard-pressed German industry found it difficult to keep up.

During the battle, the British built 2,354 new aircraft, while the Germans only replaced 975. There was also a huge loss of German lives; Germans lacked pilots to fly the bombing raids.

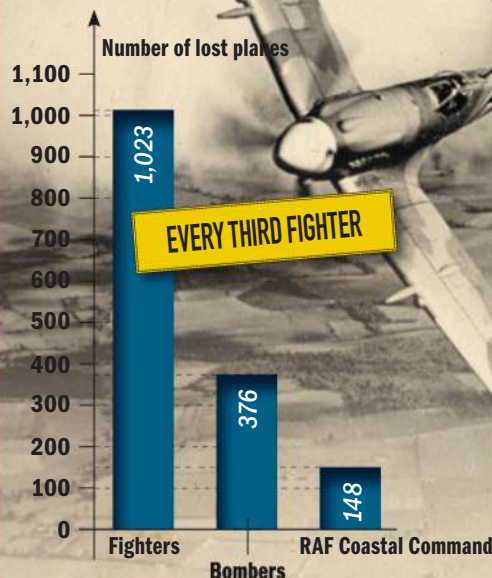


Luftwaffe's Heinkel He-111 was the Germans' strategic bomber at the start of the war.

British losses



Even when fighters were destroyed, one in two pilots survived.

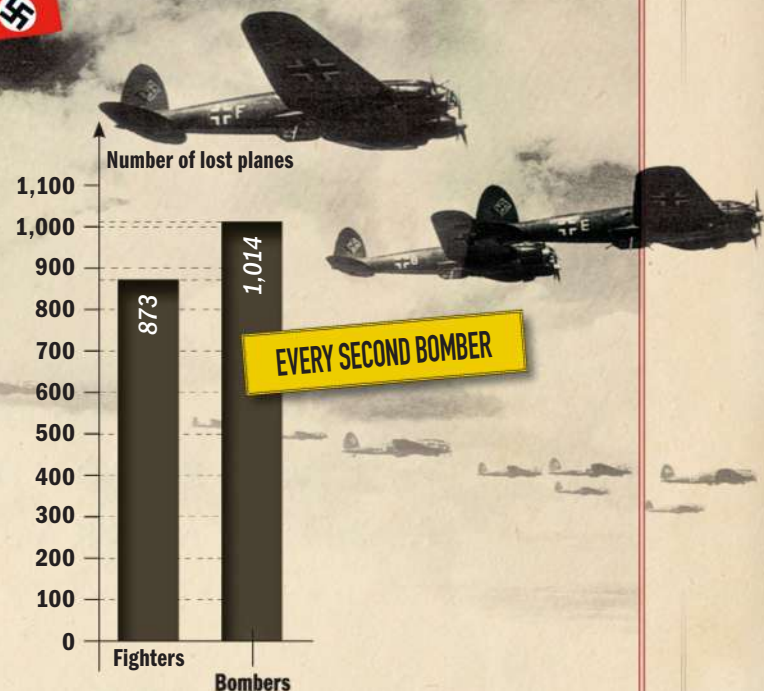


Total planes: **1,547** out of **1,963**

Personnel: **537**

Civilian loss: **43,000** killed
46,000 wounded

German losses



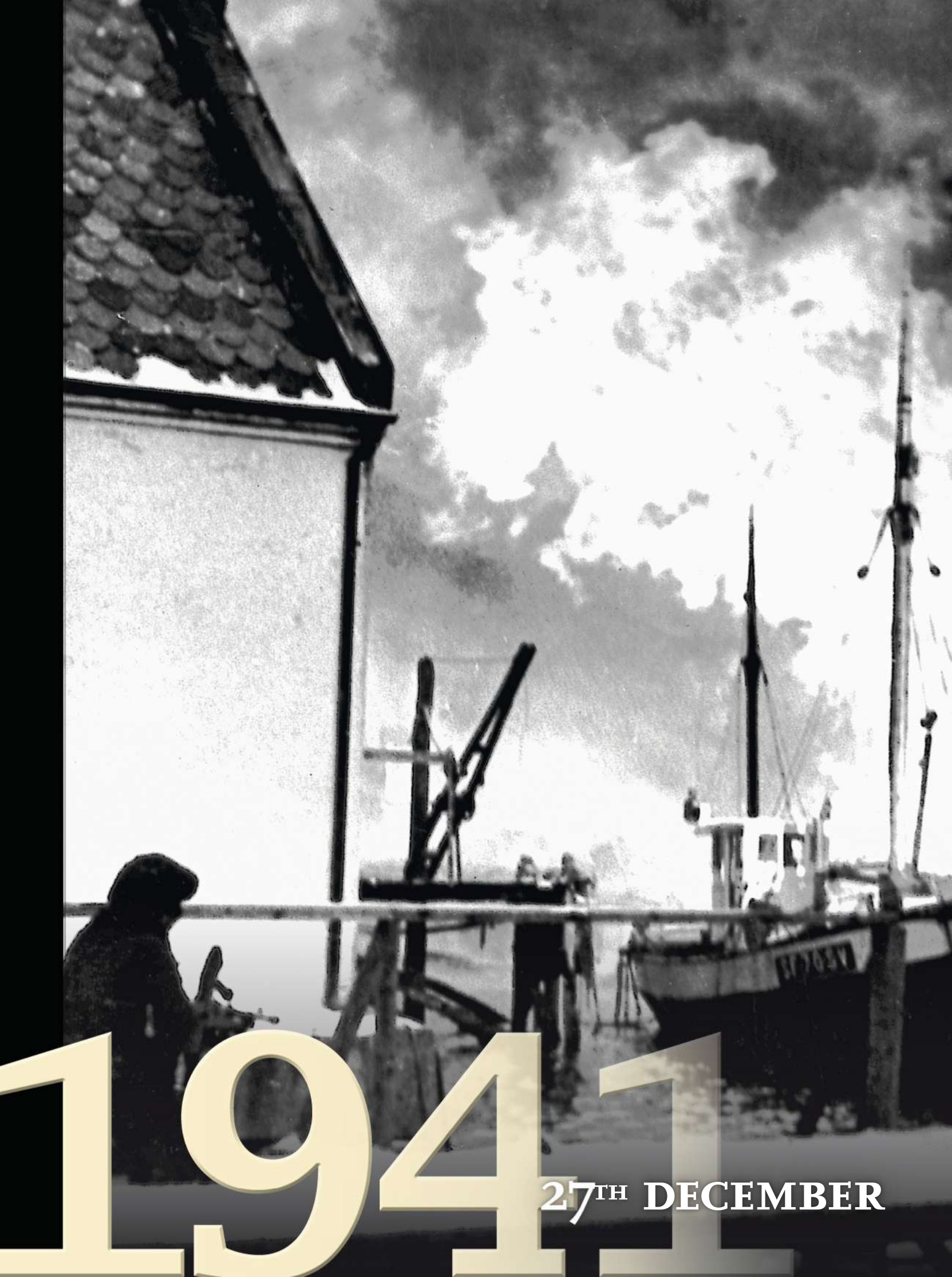
Total planes: **1,887** out of **2,550**

Personnel: **2,662**

Civilian loss: In principle none, because the battle took place over Britain, but British revenge bombings cost a smaller number of German lives.

The German bomber had four men on board. They rarely survived a crash.





1941

27TH DECEMBER



• • NORWEGIAN ISLAND RAID • •

LIGHTNING RAID SABOTAGES NAZI WAR MACHINE

Just after Christmas 1941, a task force is sent from Britain to destroy important factories in the small town of Måløy in western Norway. British and Norwegian soldiers anticipate a straightforward task – unaware that a battle-hardened German contingent happens to be on leave on the island.

Måløy was a centre for processing fish oil, which was used in the manufacture of high-powered explosives.

THE STAGE IS SET



In 1940, Germany occupies Norway. The Nazis force its factories to produce raw materials for its arms industry. Fish oil is converted into glycerine, which is used to produce explosives for the German army. The British prepare a raid against the island Vågsøy on the west coast to destroy the Nazis' supply of raw materials.



THE GROUP OF BRITISH COMMANDOS found themselves entrenched outside the old Ulvesund Hotel in Måløy in western Norway. They'd only met sporadic resistance up until now, but the advance had stalled. The Germans had barricaded themselves in the hotel, putting up fierce resistance. Machine guns sent crackling volleys of bullets down the main street towards the British soldiers, who were forced to pin themselves to the walls of surrounding houses.

The soldiers – accompanied by a Norwegian unit – were taking part in Operation Archery, a raid against Måløy to destroy factories that were producing raw materials for German

bombs. Up until now, the Brits had only expected modest opposition, but were now confused as the white snow on the street slowly turned black as ash fell from burning buildings. Two British officers had already been hit by German bullets, and no one knew who should assume responsibility for leading the attack. Several soldiers were ready to retreat, leaving the entire campaign at risk of failure, when Norwegian captain Martin Linge arrived. Linge encouraged the British soldiers to make another attack on the hotel, and with Sergeant Ruben Larsen behind him, ran out onto the snowy main street.

"Suddenly, without any warning a bullet hit Captain Linge. I tried to get him away when another was fired, probably meant for me, which also hit him. I then took cover behind the

There were around 30 British commando units during the war.



The whole of Måløy's industry went up in flames after the attack. The vast majority of German soldiers were either killed or taken prisoner.

Norwegian civilians helped the soldiers to designate targets and transport equipment.

entrance to the hotel”, Larsen recalled later as his captain was killed from a shot to the chest.

Linge’s sacrifice was not in vain, however. No British soldier now contemplated retreating, and instead they maintained the pressure on the Germans at Hotel Ulvesund. Half an hour later, reinforcements with mortars arrived and soon the resistance was ended.

Martin Linge was the first Norwegian commando to be killed in the war – but he would not be the last.

GERMANS WOULD FEEL THREATENED

The raid on Måløy on the island of Vågsøy code-named “Operation Archery” was one of the first in a long series of military pin pricks conducted by British commandos against Norway. The idea behind these so-called hit-and-run tactics was to demonstrate to the Germans that the Allies could strike anywhere. This persistent threat would force the Nazis to deploy large forces in northern Europe – far away from the battlefields on the Eastern Front and in Africa.

In Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s words, the commandos’ mission was to “set Europe ablaze!” Commando



Commandos were transported to shore using swift landing vessels.

units were organised under the Special Operations Executive (SOE), and were popularly known as “Churchill’s Secret Army”. In most operations on their native soil, Norwegian soldiers exiled in Britain supported the units.

The goals of Operation Archery on 27th December, 1941 included destroying the city’s harbour, which was used by the Germans, to gather intelligence and – last, but not least – set fire to the many fish-oil factories in the area. Vågsøy was an important centre in the production of fish oil, which was converted into glycerine, a key component of the German weapons industry’s production of nitro-glycerine and explosives.

The mission was carefully mapped out over many months, partly with the help of the Norwegian

FACTS

PRESS COVERED RAID

■ A total of 576 men participated in Operation Archery: officers, soldiers, engineering troops and members of the press.

■ Among the soldiers was a Norwegian unit led by Martin Linge. One of its tasks was to identify and arrest Norwegians suspected of collaborating with the German occupying forces.

■ Seven warships, a submarine and more than 50 bombers and fighter planes took part in the operation.

■ Operation Archery was one of the British SOE’s (Special Operations Executive) most photographed and well-documented raids, including a number of film newsreels.

Factories were targeted

The action on Vågsøy was carefully planned – the soldiers had studied the area thoroughly and the entire mission was completed over the course of eight hours. Naval and aerial bombardments kept the defenders occupied and unable to prevent the attack.



British squadrons flew from bases in Scotland and the Shetland Isles to attack several airports, so only a few Luftwaffe were able to get airborne.

1 Ships and planes bomb targets

British warships begin a nine-minute bombardment of coastal batteries in Moldøva. At the same time bombs are dropped on a coastal battery on Rugsundøya 10 kilometres away.



Crown Colony-class cruiser HMS Kenya led the Allied naval force.

2 Soldiers get cover

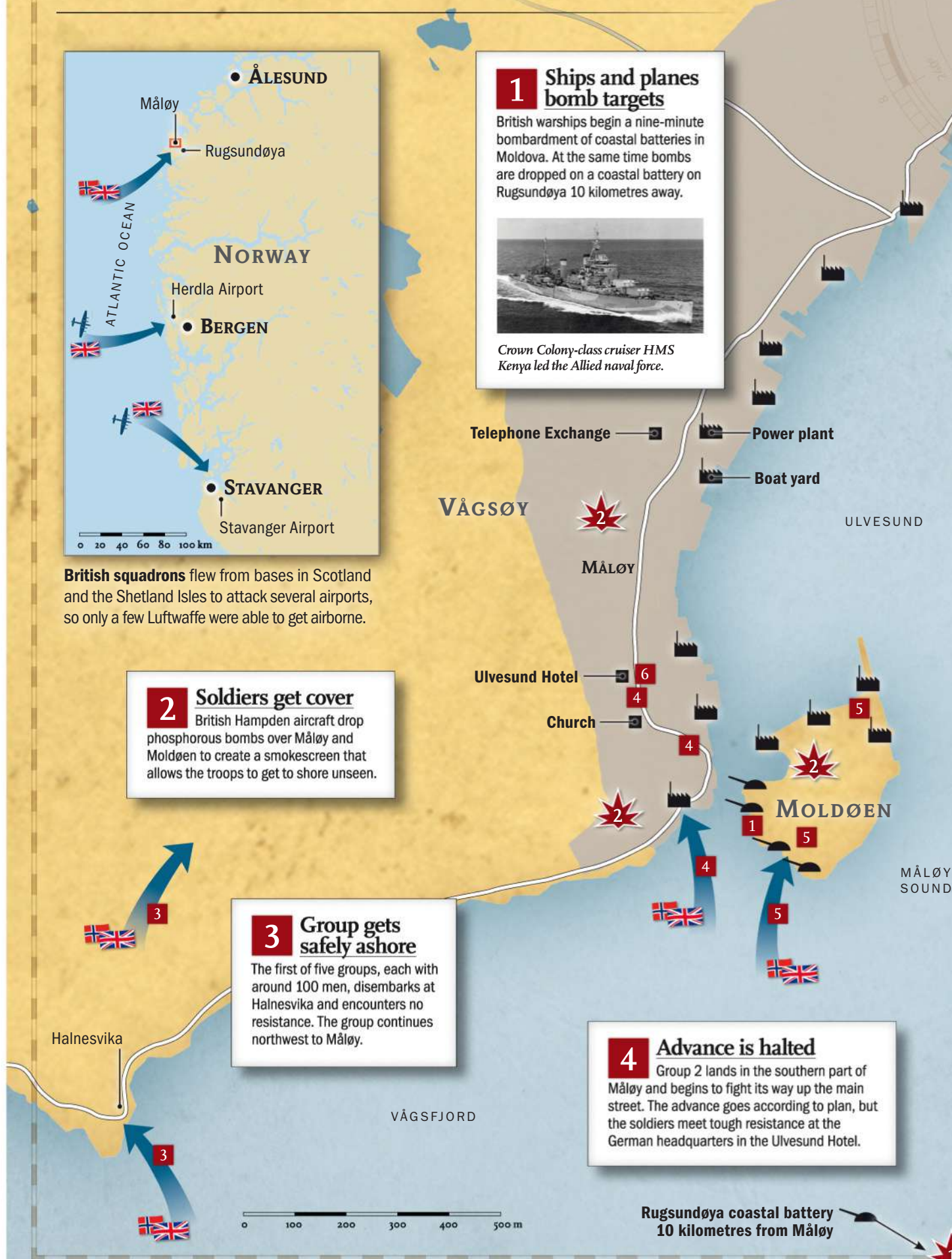
British Hampden aircraft drop phosphorous bombs over Måløy and Moldøen to create a smokescreen that allows the troops to get to shore unseen.

3 Group gets safely ashore

The first of five groups, each with around 100 men, disembarks at Halmesvik and encounters no resistance. The group continues northwest to Måløy.

4 Advance is halted

Group 2 lands in the southern part of Måløy and begins to fight its way up the main street. The advance goes according to plan, but the soldiers meet tough resistance at the German headquarters in the Ulvesund Hotel.



7



British and
Norwegian forces



Air strike



Event



Coastal Battery



Factory

7 Group protects northern approach

Group 4 is landed north of Vågsøy. Their job is to prevent enemy troops from entering from the north and disrupting the operation.

6 Reinforcements are called in

A reserve group is sent in as reinforcements in the fight against the German headquarters at the Ulvesund Hotel in the town centre.

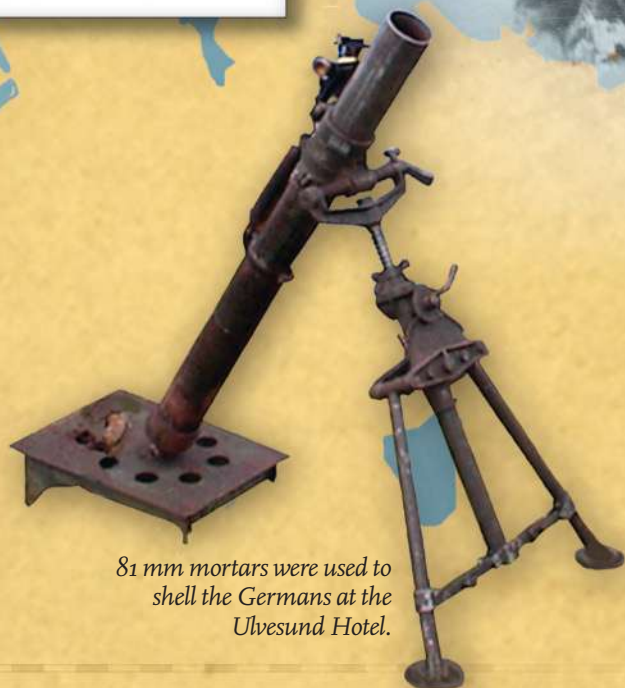
Mortenes oil factory

5

5 Soldiers have it easy

Group 3 lands on Moldøyen and meets almost no resistance. At 10.30, the unit commander communicates that all resistance on the island has been defeated. After destroying the island's fish-oil factories, a division continues to Mortenes on the other side of the strait and sets fire to the area's largest oil factory.

Denis O'Flaherty



81 mm mortars were used to shell the Germans at the Ulvesund Hotel.

Lieutenant Denis O'Flaherty lost an eye, but later returned to the army.

Wounded soldiers were treated on the ships on their way back to Britain.



ALLIED RAIDS IN NORWAY

ATTACKS LEFT GERMANS INSECURE

1941

4TH MARCH

Operation Claymore, Lofoten: in the first Norwegian raid, 800 commandos destroy several fish-oil factories. They return with 225 German prisoners and 315 Norwegian volunteers as well as an Enigma code wheel.

26-27TH DECEMBER

Operation Archery and Operation Anklet, Vågsøy and Lofoten: Operation Anklet at Lofoten starts one day before Archery as a diversionary tactic. At Lofoten, commandos succeed in sinking several German ships and destroying enemy radio transmitters.



Operation Anklet at Lofoten met with little resistance and was carried out without any Allied losses.

1942

20TH SEPTEMBER

Operation Musketoon, Glomfjord: two Norwegian and 10 English commandos are ferried to Glomfjord by submarine and blow up the power plant, which had been supplying power to a nearby factory.

19TH NOVEMBER

Operation Freshman, Vemork: 34 commandos in two gliders attempt to reach a heavy water factory in Vemork in southern Norway to destroy the plant. However, both gliders crash in the wilderness, and all involved perish – either in the crash or later after capture and execution by German soldiers.

resistance movement. Thanks to their input, the British had built a large model in London representing the town, its islands and the branched network of fjords, including a detailed overview of existing buildings and German defence positions.

The plan was to land four commando units, each with around 100 men, in separate locations. They were to deal with resistance and blow up fish-oil factories and military installations. A fifth group would be kept on board the ships in reserve to be deployed in an emergency, which became necessary when the commandos encountered strong resistance at the Ulvesund Hotel.

SHIPS CAME CLOSE TO SINKING

On Christmas Eve, all was ready. Several ships led by the cruiser *HMS Kenya* departed from the naval base Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, bound for Norway. But the same day, the fleet was forced seek shelter in the Shetland Islands because of heavy weather. The two troopships *Prince Charles* and *The Walnut Tree* were both former North Sea ferries, and had taken on a lot of water having not been designed to operate in high waves.

Christmas Day was spent anchored at Sullom Voe while the crew performed emergency repairs. But the day after the weather had improved, and by the morning of 27th December the ships had reached the west coast of Norway. *HMS Kenya* made contact with the submarine *Tuna*, which had surveyed the area for days beforehand. At 07:39, while the island of Vågsøy was still shrouded in winter darkness, the ships began to sail up the Vågsfjord towards the island's main town of Måløy.

A German checkpoint had actually observed the British warships' passage, but in the dark the fleet was confused with an expected convoy of German cargo ships. It wasn't until Hampden bombers from the Scottish RAF bases at Wick and Sumburgh dropped their bombs on the German coastal battery in Rugsundøya barely 10 kilometres from Vågsøy that it became clear an attack was underway. But it was too late. The British warships turned broadside against the German defences and fired a hail of shells over the area's only other coastal battery on the tiny island of Moldøen next to Måløy. More than 400 shells fell over a small area in the space of just nine minutes.

Under cover of the bombardment, destroyer *HMS Chiddingfold* escorted the troop carriers close to land, and

Both factories and fish-oil stocks were set on fire during the Allied raid.



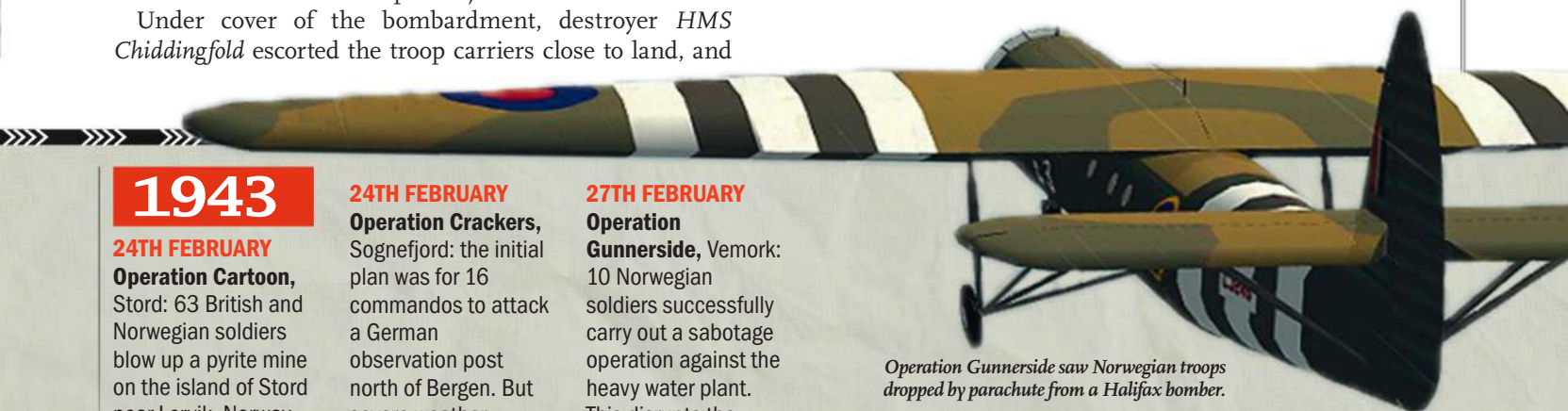
Captured German soldiers spent the rest of the war in British PoW camps.

landing boats containing the commandos were put in the water. When the warship guns fell silent, the bombers swung across the Manse and reopened their bomb hatches over the island again. This time they dropped a load of chemical "smoke" bombs, designed to provide a phosphorous smokescreen to help mask the commandos' landing.

During the approach, one bomber was hit by projectiles from one of the few active anti-aircraft units. The damaged plane was forced to drop its load prematurely, and one of the smoke bombs fell into one of the landing vessels. Two men were killed instantly, and several others later died of burns from the smouldering phosphorus.

The massive bombardment on the German positions on Moldøen had its effect. The guns were put out of play, and the German's soldiers caught so unawares that commandos were able to occupy the island almost without firing a shot. At about 10.30, the unit leader announced that resistance had been quelled and that they could begin to blast the many oil installations.

The situation was different in Måløy, where the advance was slow in several places. German soldiers had entrenched themselves in both public buildings and



Operation Gunnerside saw Norwegian troops dropped by parachute from a Halifax bomber.

1943

24TH FEBRUARY

Operation Cartoon, Stord: 63 British and Norwegian soldiers blow up a pyrite mine on the island of Stord near Lervik, Norway. One commando loses his life.

24TH FEBRUARY

Operation Crackers, Sognefjord: the initial plan was for 16 commandos to attack a German observation post north of Bergen. But severe weather makes it impossible for the soldiers to land. Instead, the group uses its time to both intercept German radio communications and gather intelligence.

27TH FEBRUARY

Operation Gunnerside, Vemork: 10 Norwegian soldiers successfully carry out a sabotage operation against the heavy water plant. This disrupts the supply of heavy water, helping delay the development of a potential German nuclear bomb. All ten soldiers also escape with their lives to neutral Sweden.

14TH MARCH

Operation Brandy, Florø Harbour: seven Norwegian soldiers in two torpedo boats attack the Germans at Florø on the west coast. Three

German ships are destroyed, including the steamer *Optima*. During the retreat, one of the torpedo boats runs aground, but all soldiers are safely recovered.

28TH APRIL

Operation Checkmate, Haugesund: seven British commandos are captured and die attempting to sink ships in Haugesund.



German industry made use of the mineral pyrite.

residential properties, which they defended doggedly using both machine guns and hand grenades.

"There was fighting from room to room in individual houses filled with both frightened civilians and German fighters", one of the British soldiers recalled.

At the same time, German snipers posed problems in several parts of the town. Soldiers reported how everything seemed quiet until a comrade by their side suddenly collapsed, hit by a bullet that apparently came out of nowhere.

Resistance at the Ulvesund Hotel was particularly fierce, where the Germans had set up their headquarters. The Allies had expected to be able to occupy the hotel without major problems, but they hadn't known that 50 experienced German Gebirgsjäger ("mountain hunters") had taken Christmas leave in Måløy. The group consisted of battle-hardened veterans who, among other things, had participated in the invasion of Norway in 1940 and had experienced street fighting several times. The Gebirgsjäger were not inclined to surrender and quickly found their weapons. When Martin Linge arrived, several Allied soldiers had already lost their lives.

British commander John Durnford-Slater decided to call in the fifth reserve unit from the ships as reinforcements. Once they arrived with their mortars, the Allies were able to shell the hotel without getting in the firing line. A few minutes of intense bombardment proved sufficient to remove the last German resistance.

In addition to several soldiers, a Norwegian civilian also lost his life during the attack after being hit by shrapnel, but with all German opposition removed, the commandos were free to carry out the purpose of their operation: to destroy the factories

The War Cross with Sword was Norway's highest military honour, and was awarded to Martin Linge.

that were supporting the German arms industry. Production facilities in the area were blown up, while large stocks of fish oil and glycerine around the city were set on fire.

Also destroyed were several German fortifications and the docks where the commandos had disembarked. The sabotage was carried out with virtually no interference from the Luftwaffe thanks to British bombing raids that destroyed several German air bases.

LUFTWAFFE UNABLE TO LAUNCH

Earlier that morning, the Royal Air Force had bombed the airports at Herdla and Stavanger, where Luftwaffe aircraft were based. The runways were destroyed, so only a few German planes were able to take to the skies. Those that managed to fly were unable to penetrate the massive bombardment from the British warships. At the same time, Bristol Beaufighters and Blenheim fighters commuted from bases in Scotland and the Shetland Islands to ensure the Allies had air supremacy throughout the operation. Only one Blenheim was shot down during a dogfight with two Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighters.

In addition to keeping the German aircraft at arm's length, British destroyers scouted the waters around Vågsøy for German



1894-1941

**MARTIN LINGE**

TITLE

CAPTAIN

Actor became focal point

Martin Linge started out as a theatre actor in Oslo and had also appeared in several movies. When Norway was invaded by Nazi Germany in 9th April, 1940, Linge reported for duty as a former officer in his regiment and fought for several weeks in southern and western Norway. Around 17th April, British forces arrived in the west coast vicinity where Linge's unit was stationed and he became a liaison officer. Later he was wounded by shrapnel and sailed to Britain.

Linge became a focal point for Norwegians in England, and together with author Nordahl Grieg was a driving force in forming a Norwegian unit. Linge joined the company and was killed on the stairs at the Ulvesund Hotel in Måløy. After his death, the unit was named after him. Linge also received the War Cross with Sword and many other honours posthumously.

- Debuted at the theatre in 1921.
- Had many roads named after him.

ships. During the day, the British boarded or sunk eight German steamers and armoured trawlers. Marines even seized a complete copy of a German codebook from one of the boarded vessels.

During a previous raid in the north of Norway – Operation Claymore – the British had managed to get hold of a code wheel for the Enigma cipher machine. When paired with the codebook, British experts could begin the process of breaking the German Enigma codes.

GARRISON WAS WIPED OUT

At 14.00, those forces on land began their withdrawal. Landing boats and waiting ships were ready to receive them, and from the deck the commandos could enjoy the view as factories in the harbour area went up in flames.

In the space of eight hours, all the oil factories in the area had been destroyed. Eight ships were put out of action, more than 120 enemy soldiers killed and 98 captured along with four Norwegians suspected of being collaborators.

In addition, 71 civilian Norwegians volunteered to accompany the soldiers back to Britain – both to enlist in the war and to escape subsequent German reprisals. Several civilians who didn't leave were arrested after the attack – some were later released, but others ended up in concentration camps.

As the afternoon descended into darkness against a backdrop of burning buildings, the Allied fleet set course for Scapa Flow. The British also took several boxes of documents, including some from the German HQ at the Ulvesund Hotel.

When the German general Kurt Woytasch inspected the damage the day after, only a few German soldiers were alive to talk about the attack. Virtually all of the garrison's complement of over 200 men had either been killed or captured.

The campaign cost the Allies 17 commandos and two marines, while the Royal Air Force lost 11 planes and 31 crew members. Most of the planes had been shot down by anti-aircraft fire during the bombing of the German airports at Herdla and Stavanger.

CHURCHILL WAS IN HIGH SPIRITS

British High Command led by Winston Churchill were left extremely satisfied with Operation Archery. The meticulous planning and cooperation between army, navy and air force became a model for many future operations – both in Norway and other German-occupied countries.

Perhaps the biggest benefit was that the operation in western Norway strengthened the Nazi conviction that Norway and Denmark required protecting from Allied invasion. The British intended to provide the impression that a major invasion was being prepared and could be put into action at any moment. In response to the perceived threat, the Germans diverted a significant portion of its fleet to Norway, including the battleships *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Tirpitz*. The ships only played a modest role in the war, and were absent during the Battle of the Atlantic.

At the same time, the raid forced the Germans to deploy more troops to the region. General Falkenhorst, commander of the German forces in Norway, requested more soldiers in the wake of Operation Archery, and Adolf Hitler said yes. Over the following months, German forces in Norway gradually swelled by 30,000 men. By the middle of 1944, around 350,000 were stationed in Norway – without ever seeing battle.

Norwegians fought back from Britain

After each raid in Norway, volunteers returned to Britain. Here the Norwegians formed one of the war's most effective foreign companies.

Shortly after Norway was occupied in 1940, a group of Norwegians gathered in England, including seamen and refugees. The exiled Norwegians founded a unit whose numbers were swelled by the number of young people returning with British commandos after the numerous raids on Norwegian soil.

"Kompani Linge", as the unit became known, became one of the most effective and highly decorated foreign units operating in the UK. In addition to raiding in Norway, the company also took part in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day.

530 Norwegians enrolled in Kompani Linge during the war.

245 were members of the corps at the end of the war in 1945.

57 were killed in service.

Happy Norwegians in London were ready to fight to liberate their homeland.





• ECONOMIC OFFENSIVE •

UK STERLING FORGED BY KZ CAMP INMATES

In an isolated, top-secret area of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, a group of Jews are working on a special Nazi project. The Germans have handpicked former printers and typographers to create fake banknotes to throw the British economy into chaos.

1942

8TH MAY



£134 million in fake banknotes were made by prisoners at the Sachsenhausen camp during the final three years of the war.

THE STAGE IS SET



In 1942, the Germans test a special weapon against the enemy. In an effort to undermine Allied military efforts, the Nazis plan to trigger towering inflation in the US and UK. SS officer Bernhard Krüger will lead the operation and goes in search of concentration camp prisoners who can help the Germans forge money.



EVEN BEFORE THE MEETING ON 8th May, 1942, SS officer Bernhard Krüger had sensed that something big was in the offing. He'd been summoned for an "urgent meeting" by Walter Schellenberg, head of the Third Reich's civilian foreign intelligence agency.

The SS officer entered his superior's office in Berlin. The room resembled a cross between a fort and a communications centre. It had a direct telephone line to Adolf Hitler, while hidden microphones had been placed in the lamps. In addition, photoelectric cells in the walls could reveal intruders. As a final

security measure, Schellenberg had two machine guns built into the desk. The weapons were loaded and aimed at visitors.

"I have asked you to come to me to transmit an important order from the Reichsführer SS", said Schellenberg, referring to the SS leader Heinrich Himmler. "This order directs that the necessary measures be taken immediately for the fabrication of English pound notes".

The purpose was to drop the banknotes over Britain, so that civilians would collect and use them. The increased money supply would create inflation, cause the country's economy to collapse and destroy Britain's combat power.

"The workforce is to be taken from the reservoir of prisoners of Jewish descent", added Schellenberg.

The decision to use fake money as a weapon during the war had already been made by senior SS officers in the autumn of 1939, two weeks after the war began. But no one had foreseen the huge difficulties the project would run into. It was only in 1942 that specialists at the Hahnemühle paper mill in Dassel had finally produced a perfect forgery of the special "rag paper" that the Bank of England used to produce its notes.

The project was named Operation Bernhard after Krüger and needed to be launched as soon as possible if it were to work against the Allies. Krüger wasted little time in issuing a command to all major camps: "You must inform me immediately about all Jewish prisoners who are from the graphic arts. Specialists in paper, or any other skilled worker (eg, hairdresser)".

WORKERS CAME FROM AUSCHWITZ

Krüger knew that Jewish prisoners were particularly qualified for this task: many were highly qualified and would be easy to get rid of once the operation had been completed.

Slovak Jew and typographer Adolf Burger was one of those prisoners who piqued Krüger's interest. After the Nazi occupation of Slovakia in 1938, Burger had gone underground and produced dozens of fake Catholic baptismal certificates for the country's Jews to help them avoid being deported to the concentration (KZ) camps.

The Gestapo tracked down the Slovakian and had sent him to the KZ camp in Auschwitz, where he'd become increasingly famished and destitute. Burger had been told that the Germans had sent his 23-year-old wife Gisela to the gas chamber, and now he was preparing for his own death. One day, however, he was ordered to report to the camp




NAME	BERNHARD KRÜGER
TITLE	SS OFFICER

Textile engineer was counterfeiter

SS officer Bernhard Krüger was an obvious choice to head the Nazis' extensive foreign currency counterfeiting programme. He graduated as a textile engineer with insight into materials and was responsible for selecting paper, colours and tools. Krüger was briefly imprisoned after the war, but he was later acquitted by a denazification court.

- Got post-war job at a paper mill.
- Was never punished for executions.

1904-1989





NAME	ADOLF BURGER
TITLE	KZ CAMP PRISONER AND TYPOGRAPHER

Fellow inmates saved the ailing Jew

Adolf Burger was a Slovak Jew who'd been incarcerated in the Auschwitz extermination camp prior to joining Operation Bernhard. While at the camp, he was subjected to medical experiments by SS doctor Josef Mengele on behalf of industrial company IG Farben. He was injected with a typhus vaccine and was ill for six weeks. During his illness, fellow inmates hid him away to save him from being sent to the gas chamber.

- Sued IG Farben after the war.
- Wrote a memoir in 2007.

1917-2016


commandant Rudolf Höss. Burger asked himself what this could possibly mean, and came up with only one logical answer: the gas chamber. The KZ prisoner was therefore completely unprepared for what followed.

"Prisoner Burger? Trade, typographer?" Höss asked after the Slovak turned up in his office.

"Yes, sir!" Burger replied after each question.

"You are going to Berlin, Herr Burger. We need specialists such as yourself", said Höss in a friendly voice. For the first time in 18 months, Adolf Burger had not been referred to as "Prisoner number 64,401". Even so, he was greatly concerned about what awaited him.

Other prisoners selected for the project were more eager and happy just to escape certain death at the KZ camp. When a Dutch lithographer at Auschwitz was chosen, his friend Max Groen rushed to say that he had also worked in the profession. It was a desperate lie. Nevertheless, Krüger asked him: "What do you know about retouching?"

Groen remembered a book he'd once flipped through. "American retouching," he blurted. "Ah, you mean positive retouching", replied Krüger. Groen joined the team.

Prisoners were transported to the Sachsenhausen KZ camp

The Germans also printed fake Italian and Yugoslavian money to increase inflation.



30 kilometres north of Berlin.

This was no extermination camp, but used to deliver labour to the construction and arms industries. Nevertheless, arbitrary executions and indiscriminate violence flourished there.

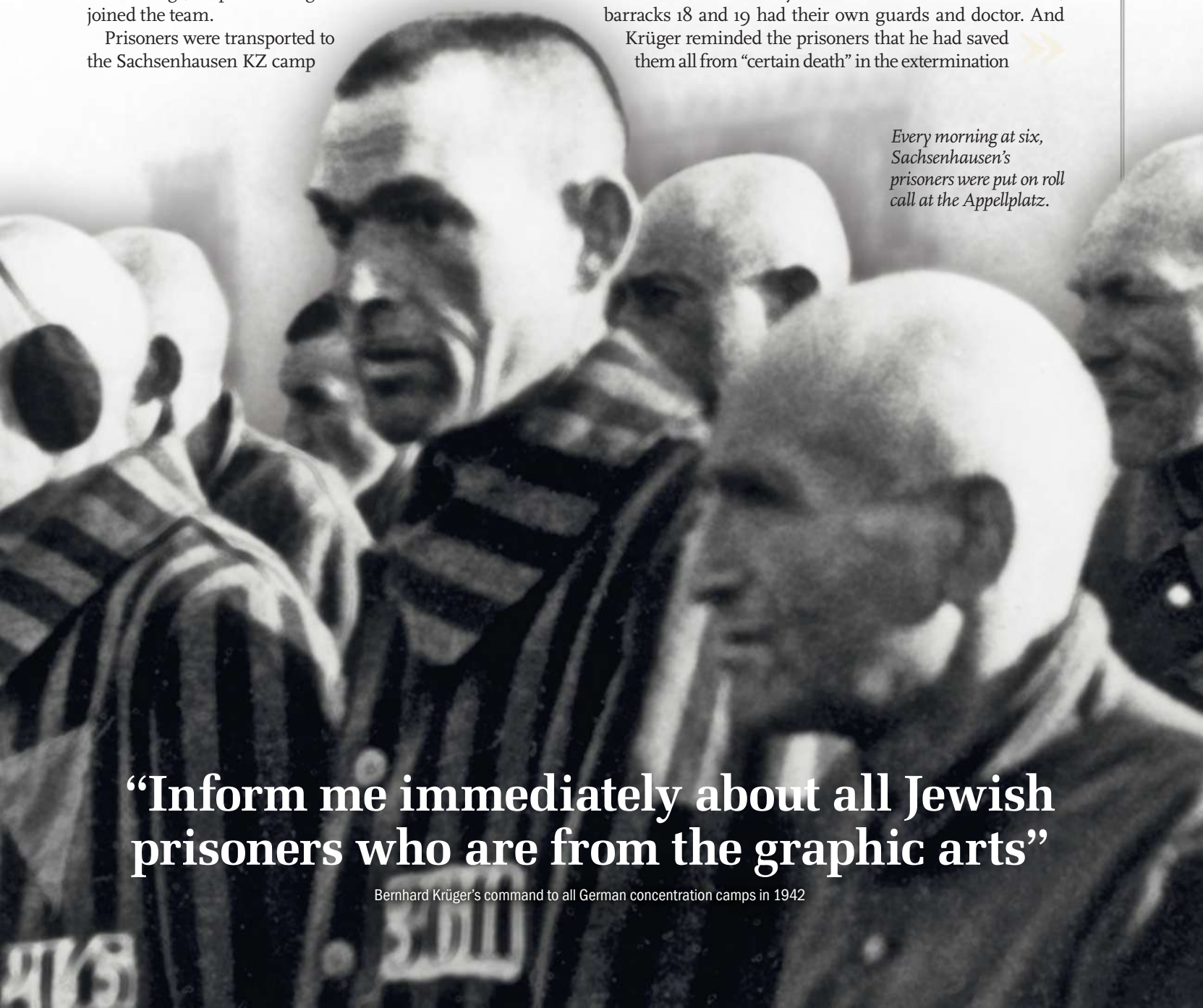
Burger was led to a special section of camp that was hidden behind a tall fence. Here lay barracks 18 and 19.

CAPTURE WOULD SABOTAGE OPERATION

The rest of the handpicked prisoners had already arrived at Sachsenhausen where Krüger informed them about the operation. The job was to produce false documents and passports, but first and foremost millions of British pounds.

The work was top secret, the SS officer stressed. No one was to have contact with anyone from the outside. Therefore, barracks 18 and 19 had their own guards and doctor. And Krüger reminded the prisoners that he had saved them all from "certain death" in the extermination

Every morning at six, Sachsenhausen's prisoners were put on roll call at the Appellplatz.



"Inform me immediately about all Jewish prisoners who are from the graphic arts"

Bernhard Krüger's command to all German concentration camps in 1942

“If they’d discontinued the print shop... [we’d] have ended up in the crematorium.”

Moritz Nachtstern, Norwegian prisoner and typographer

camps: “If you do your job well, you do not have to fear anything. One day the war will be over, and you will be able to leave these barracks. You surely understand that we cannot give you full freedom. Your work must always be a secret. Do a good job and our victory will reward you”, he promised.

He had set up a complete counterfeit workshop – or rather factory – with engraving workshop, photo laboratory, counting room and six modern printing presses, including four of the latest Monopol Type 4 models. The prisoners were relieved to have escaped from the extermination camps – here they were treated relatively well with larger food rations, their own beds, closet for personal property and the right to wear civilian clothes.

On the other hand, the prisoners knew they were carrying a secret that the Nazis would do anything to protect.

“I wasn’t going to survive”, Burger said in 2007. “When I went through the gates I knew I’d die sooner or later. In my soft bed I had only one thought: I was a dead man on holiday.”

The men had lost family and friends in the camps. Now some saw a chance for revenge. Max Bober, a printer from Berlin, tried to persuade the others to practice sabotage by working sloppy and slow. “We have a weapon in our hands, which we have to use”, he argued.

However, the majority rejected his idea and concentrated on survival. “We live here under a roof and don’t have to watch

people freeze to death,” said fellow prisoner Artur Tuppler. “Let’s make the best of the situation”.


BANK APPROVED THE BANKNOTES

None of the prisoners had been counterfeiters before the war. But through instruction and on-the-job learning, the men mastered their new craft, familiarising themselves with engraving and printing techniques.

The counterfeiters first needed to find and copy the secret security markings on the banknotes. In particular, the Britannia seal – a mark of a seated dressed woman in the top left corner of the banknote – drove the men crazy because the symbol contained both microscopic details and hidden marks. Krüger had ordered that everything on the fake money had to be perfect, but with each trial the prisoners improved their own technique and the notes became more accurate copies.

The exhausting work was split into two shifts, with the machines running endlessly. Fake £5, £10, £20 and £50 notes poured out of the printing presses. All banknotes were carefully scrutinised and sorted by quality. The money was then counted and bundled as in a real bank. The currency store became known as the “Bank of England”. But Krüger would not be satisfied until the banknotes had passed a special test. One day in 1943, a prisoner was sent to



A black and white photograph showing a long row of men, identified as Sachsenhausen prisoners, working in a workshop. They are seated at long wooden tables, each with a sewing machine. The men are dressed in dark, simple clothing. The room has a high ceiling with several hanging lamps. The background shows more tables and workers, creating a sense of a large, industrial-scale workshop.

Tailor's workshops were among the rooms where the Sachsenhausen prisoners were forced to work.

In a "neutral" zone near the wall surrounding the concentration camp, prisoners could be shot without warning by guards.

NEUTRALE ZONE

Es wird ohne Anruf
sofort scharf geschossen

KZ CAMP

Camp hid secret department

60,000 prisoners in barracks surrounded two secret buildings inside which around 140 forgers worked, completely hidden from the rest of Sachsenhausen.

Section for special prisoners, including Georg Elser, who was behind an assassination attempt on Hitler, and Stalin's son Yakov Dzhugashvili.

Special camp for prisoners of war from the western Allied countries.

Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp

Execution space

Crematorium and gas chamber

Horticultural area

Prisoner kitchen

Laundry

Disinfection and delousing

Barracks for Soviet prisoners.

Gestapo prison

Infirmary

Camp commander

Roll call area had two gallows.

Gate house

Barracks 38 and 39 were for Jewish KZ camp prisoners.

Barracks 18 and 19, where the Jewish forgers lived and worked.

Barrack 58 was solitary confinement.



STAMPS WERE WEAPONS

Operation Bernhard was also tasked with producing British stamps, a weapon in the propaganda war against Britain.

One of the stamps showed:

- the Soviet hammer and sickle symbol and a picture of Joseph Stalin in place of George VI.
- the Star of David along with the words, "This war is a Jewish war".



Joseph Stalin and anti-Jewish slogans were printed on one of the fake stamps.

the Reichsbank in Berlin with a folder full of fake money. The banknotes were to be exchanged to investigate whether the bank's treasurer would detect the forgeries. The test was successful: every single note was accepted.

PRISONERS HAD TO PUT OUT FIRES THEMSELVES

The prisoners involved with Operation Bernhard were kept completely segregated from the rest of the KZ camp. Their isolation became apparent when a fire broke out on the barrack roof. Guards armed with machine guns prevented both inmates from escaping and firefighters from entering to tackle the blaze. The prisoners were forced to save their own lives by organising a fire-fighting detail. At the same time, uncertainty always hung over the counterfeiters' heads, not

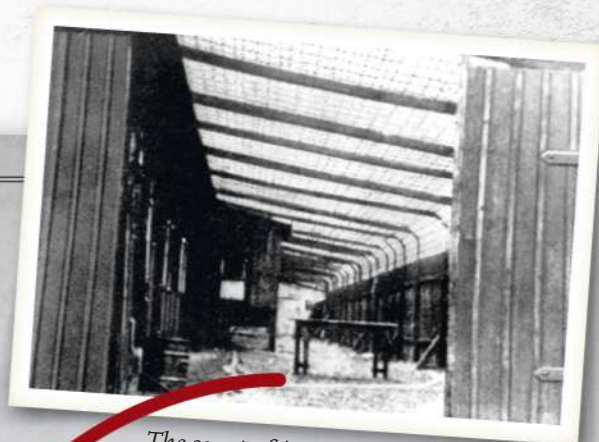
least because illness or a work-related accident could mean death. Krüger refused to send sick and injured men to the camp's infirmary because he feared that knowledge of the operation would spread. In order to keep the counterfeiting secret, sick men were instead killed. This included a young teacher from Poland who tried to conceal his tuberculosis. When the Pole coughed up blood one day, the SS officer gave him short shrift and ordered his death. A total of seven sick prisoners were executed during Operation Bernhard.

Krüger, however, was careful not to act too brutally. He knew from personal experience that unhappy workers could slow down production – and the prisoners in Operation Bernhard had a strong incentive to obstruct the work because while the project lasted, they would survive. The counterfeiters' mood

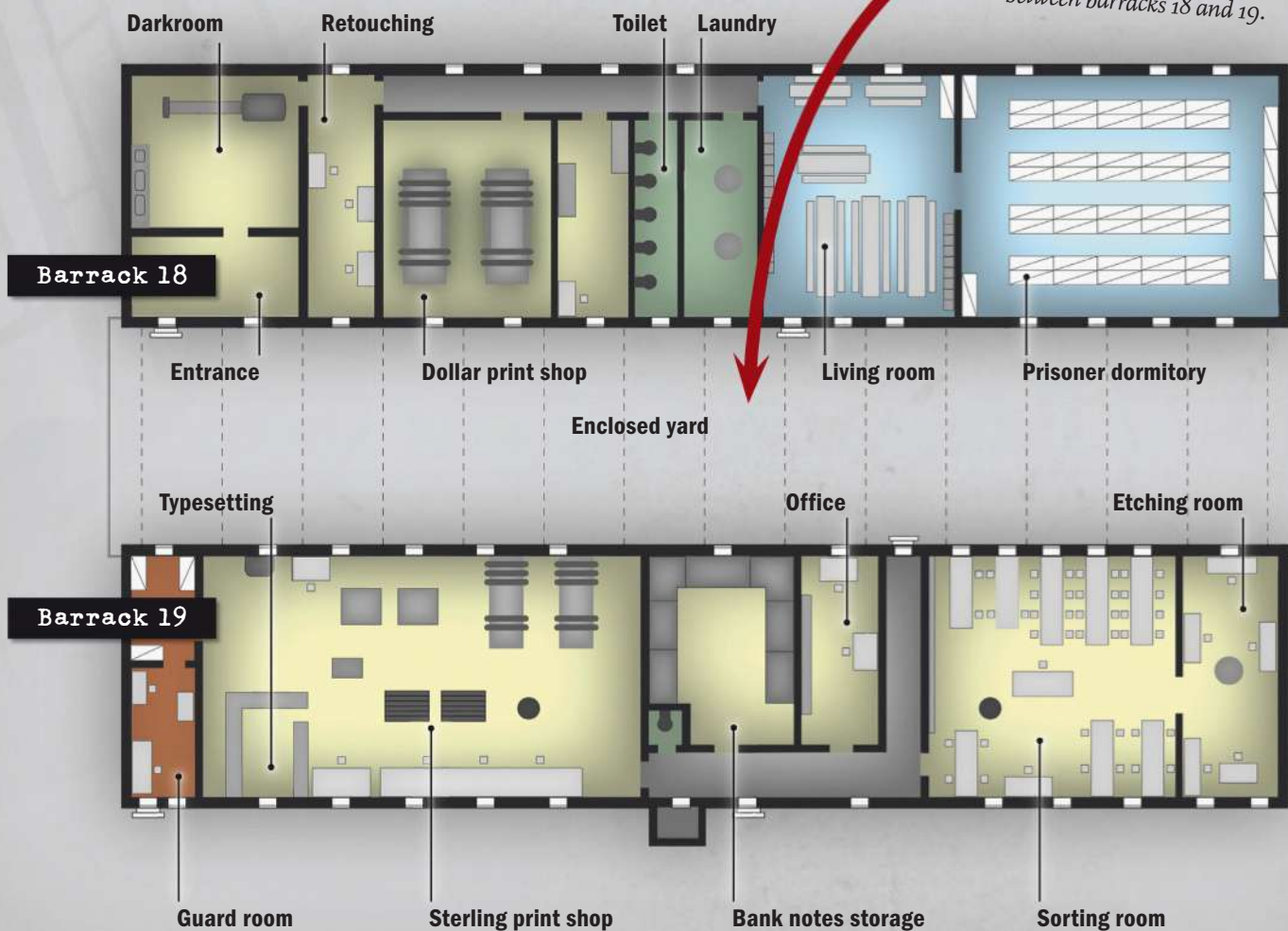
Guards ended up on the Eastern Front

Barracks 18 and 19, which housed Operation Bernhard, laid behind a fence three metres high. The place was so secret that the armed guards who patrolled in

front of the fence knew nothing about it. As extra security, guards were frequently replaced and sent to the Eastern Front, from where they weren't expected to return.



The counterfeiters could take fresh air and play table tennis in the area between barracks 18 and 19.



would need to be kept up. The SS officer decided to combine the carrot and the stick: the prisoners should be motivated by hope while also disciplined with threats.

OPERATION GAINED NEW OBJECTIVE

Krüger tried to win his workers' trust by rewarding them for good work: a rest day on Sunday, better food and tobacco rations. The German even placed a table-tennis table in the yard between the two barracks, and he also allowed the prisoners to listen to German

radio. But the counterfeiters' fears did not vanish. "It was a nerve-wracking time", Norwegian prisoner and typographer Moritz Nachtstern wrote afterwards. "If they had discontinued the print shop, it wouldn't have been long before all of us would have ended up in the crematorium."

The Nazis did not end Operation Bernhard – on the contrary, they formed a new idea: instead of throwing fake money at Britain to create financial chaos, the banknotes could also provide the Nazis with benefits during the war. The Germans were

“Do a good job, and our victory will reward you”

Bernhard Krüger to the selected KZ camp prisoners



Paper factory workers had sworn not to reveal what they produced.

Cleaning cloths became banknotes

The Bank of England used a type of paper the Germans had no chance of getting their hands on. Developing a substitute took over a year.

The first step to counterfeiting was to develop the same paper as the British used. Experts discovered that the banknotes were made from linen, so the SS ordered several tons of flax from Turkey and produced the first sample note, which was far from perfect. Researchers tried to add chemicals, but without success. Finally, they realised their mistake: British linen wasn't new, but used. The Turkish flax was distributed as cleaning cloths to Berlin's factories and later collected, cleaned and processed into paper. A new team of specialists then copied British watermarks, which appeared as a combination of light and dark marks within the paper. It wasn't until December 1940 that the SS had the knowledge they needed.

desperately short of foreign currency with which to purchase both raw materials and foreign agents. The fake banknotes effectively gave the Nazis access to millions of "pounds" with which to make these payments.

To head up this operation, the SS appointed the legendary Nazi swindler, spy and arms dealer Friedrich Paul Schwend who – through his marriage to a baroness – had access to society's upper circles. Schwend built a network of around 50 men who exchanged the fake money with unsuspecting Swiss banks and set up trades with neutral countries.

"We were able to get everything that was in short supply during the war... from US jeeps to bottles of iodine", Schwend boasted after the war's end.

The fake banknotes were pierced because the British used needles to bundle up money.

KRÜGER WANTED DOLLARS

In September 1944, Krüger entered the counterfeit workshop and declared: "Gentlemen! From today we will also make dollar bills!"

The decision coincided with a new prisoner's arrival. In August 1944, a skinny and ragged 57-year-old Russian with a poker face was led into camp. "By profession I am a counterfeiter and am recognised, even by my enemies, as a master in the field", said Salomon Smolianov by way of introduction.

"Now we have our expert," exclaimed Krüger, but the fortunes of war had reversed for Germany. Already on 6th

June, 1944 the counterfeiters had listened as Radio Berlin reported the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day. The prisoners knew that time was running out, but instead of working efficiently, they lowered their pace and waited for the end. As the bombs rained down on Berlin the counterfeiters even hoped that Sachsenhausen might be destroyed by a bomb – that would be preferable to death in the gas chamber.

Counterfeiting dollars never really started; only 200 notes were made. One day in March 1945, Krüger's Mercedes rolled into camp. "Upon my suggestion, our superiors in Berlin have decided to move the plant to a safer location", he said.

The prisoners were given 36 hours to pack the entire counterfeit factory into boxes and load them on to a train. When complete, the workers feared execution, but the SS had laid on transport – heated cattle wagons with piles of hay, so the counterfeiters could rest on the road south to the Redl-Zipf camp near Salzburg, where production would be resumed in a mine.

In late April, a tired Krüger made one final visit. "Today I am still wearing my uniform. Who knows what will happen in the next few days?" He said as he put a friendly arm around Smolianov's shoulder. "I have issued orders to have you moved to a place of safety until you are liberated."

In fact, the SS officers had planned to bury the prisoners alive in the mine, but the soldiers failed to carry out the order before US forces liberated the KZ camp. Max Groen, who had lied himself into a role in Operation Bernhard, met a US Sergeant. The American began to talk about his family and take photos from his uniform pocket. Groen gave them a swift glance.

"Just give me one good cigarette," he said.

"By profession I am a counterfeiter and am recognised, even by my enemies, as a master in the field"

Salomon Smolianov, concentration camp prisoner.

Jews fought for Hitler

As many as 150,000 German soldiers of partial Jewish descent fought for the Wehrmacht. Both privates and officers with Jewish blood in their veins served across the German army, navy and air force. There were even high-ranking SS officers who didn't meet the Aryan ideal.

US history professor Bryan Mark Rigg estimates that around 150,000 German soldiers of partial Jewish descent served in the German military during the war. According to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the soldiers fell into the category "Mischlinge" (mixed race).

Mischlinge rose high up in the officer ranks across the armed forces and even the SS. One was Erhard Milch, who ended up Field Marshal responsible for developing the Luftwaffe. As the son of a Jewish pharmacist, Milch belonged to the category of "Mischling of the 1st degree", but Hermann Göring suppressed a Gestapo investigation and gave him a certificate – "Deutschblütigkeitserklärung" – that stated the holder was of German blood.

Most Mischlinge served in the lower ranks, where they managed to hide their Jewish background or escaped punishment through honourable service.

90.000

German soldiers who, according to Rigg, had a Jewish grandparent.

60.000

The number of soldiers estimated to have had one Jewish parent.

Mischling became hailed as ideal

Half-Jew **Werner Goldberg** participated in the invasion of Poland in 1939 and was considered the perfect warrior. A German newspaper even captioned his photograph with, "The ideal German soldier". It was used on recruitment posters, but when Hitler ordered that all Mischlinge of the 1st degree should be removed from the military in April 1940, Goldberg was thrown out.




Solomon Perel together with other members of the Hitler Youth.

Jew hid in the Hitler Youth

When **Solomon Perel** was captured by a German army unit when attempting to flee Poland in 1939, he convinced them he was an Aryan German. Perel helped the unit capture Stalin's son and was later sent to Hitler Youth school. Even though he'd been circumcised, Perel managed to conceal his identity.

150,000 soldiers of partial Jewish descent served in the German military during the war.





*In 1942, canoeing British
marines trained to safely
carry mines that could be put
on enemy ships.*

1942

30TH NOVEMBER



• 🇬🇧 • OPERATION FRANKTON • 🇬🇧 •

CANOES SNEAK MARINES INTO ENEMY DOCKS

On a cold winter night, 10 British Royal Marines exit a submarine off the west coast of France. In canoes, they paddle up the rivers Gironde and Garonne to Bordeaux in order to plant explosive mines on German freight ships – a 100-kilometre journey through enemy territory.

THE STAGE IS SET



For more than two years, the Germans have occupied France and the port of Bordeaux is a focal point for the occupying force's supply lines. Ships arrive with raw materials – especially oil – that are essential for the German war machine. The British send a small group of marines to Bordeaux to sabotage the vessels.



THE MARINES HAD BEEN PREPARING FOR MONTHS: first in the ocean at Portsmouth and then at the Holy Loch submarine base in Scotland, where a specially designed canoe had been tested in all weather. But now – 30th November, 1942 – the training ended for the 12 chosen British Royal Marines. They now sat close together in the submarine *HMS Tuna* waiting for their commander, the experienced Major Herbert Hasler. The officer had planned the current mission, code named Operation Frankton, and was ready to reveal all.

"This time it is the real thing", he said. "I haven't been able to tell you before, but we have now started to carry out an actual operation against the enemy. We are going to do the sort of job we have been training for these past four months and I have chosen you chaps because I feel confident you can do it".

There was complete silence. The marines digested the news about a mission that could easily cost them their lives – without having said goodbye to loved ones. The atmosphere, however, changed rapidly from anxiety to anticipation as Hasler detailed the attack plan on a blackboard. The men were to canoe to the port of Bordeaux and sink as many German freight ships as possible. The major drew a map of the mouth of the Gironde River in the Atlantic Ocean and informed the men that the

submarine would sit about 16 kilometres south of the mouth of the river. From there, the commandos would canoe up the coast before entering the river, where a further journey of more than 100 kilometres awaited them.

The commandos were to travel at night, and head for the shore as soon as the sun's first rays appeared. Hasler showed them aerial photographs of the area. The tide of Gironde was forceful and the men could only paddle upstream when the water flowed in from the sea towards Bordeaux: each night's canoeing would require careful planning. The attack would have to take place in the second week of December, when the new moon shed little light, giving the men the greatest chance of not being detected.

According to Hasler, the light would be the least of their problems: the Germans monitored the coast using searchlights, while six minesweepers, two armed trawlers and a larger number of torpedo boats were in constant patrol across the mouth of the Gironde. On land gun batteries and radar stations constituted additional threats. The British also risked being spotted from the air as three air bases were located in the German-occupied area.

"So, everyone must keep their eyes and ears open and keep hidden during daylight", Hasler stressed, looking around.



With a folding pole, the marines could put the mines on enemy ships' hulls.



NAME

HERBERT HASLER

TITLE

MAJOR

Commander missed out on medal

As the son of a lieutenant, it was natural for Herbert Hasler to choose the military route and train as an officer. In 1940, Hasler was sent to Narvik to support the Foreign Legion during the Allied campaign in northern Norway. For his effort he received both British and French medals. Hasler was set to receive the Victoria Cross for Operation Frankton in 1942, but when the raid did not go quite as planned the award was not approved.

- Sailed across the Atlantic alone.
- Invented equipment for solo trips.



NAME

BILL SPARKS

TITLE

MARINE

Revenge was his driving force

Marine Bill Sparks joined Operation Frankton because he wanted revenge for his brother Benny, who was killed during a German torpedo attack. Sparks slipped into Gibraltar after the raid, but then nobody could confirm his story and he was arrested. Back in Britain, Sparks finally convinced the authorities about his role in the operation, and he received a medal the same year.

- Became a bus driver after the war.
- Died at the age of 80 in 2002.



*HMS Tuna's crew
knew the waters west of
France extremely well
from previous missions.*

Sergeant Samuel Wallace then said what everyone was thinking, "How do we get back, sir?"

"We walk", said Hasler, explaining that the submarine couldn't wait for them. The Germans would search both river banks and the sea once the mines in Bordeaux had detonated. They would have to escape overland. The goal was to get to Spain and from there back to Britain. Hasler explained that each man would be given a bag of "escape gear" and that the plan involved travelling on foot to a small town called Ruffec where the French Resistance would be waiting to assist.

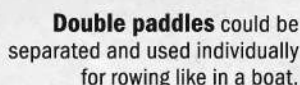
TWO MEN NEED TO TURN BACK

On the morning of 6th December, *HMS Tuna* approached the French coast after a voyage of seven days. Most of Hasler's men were struck by sea sickness along the way and the marines also suffered claustrophobia through lack of space and fresh air. There was much disappointment when the captain informed them that he could not rise to the surface before the following evening. He judged that there were too many fishing boats and he was not able to determine their exact position.

The next evening the captain finally gave the green light. The men

*Canoes were lifted from the
submarine through the front
torpedo hatch.*





The deck consisted of plywood and the sides were made from rubberised canvas.

– **The marines** sat on wooden seats that were barely three centimetres above the canoe's plywood bottom.

- **The cockpit** was covered with a waterproof coating, attached with buttons and easy to release.

By folding in its sides, the canoe could be compressed down to take up less space.

It was 19:30 when *HMS Tuna* rose to the surface.

A hatch was opened and the first men and their canoes appeared. On the way through the hatch, however, one small boat caught on its jagged edge and ripped its cover.

Hasler argued that the two men weren't necessarily in trouble. Both the men and their vessels had buoyancy aids, so the marines would press on with the attack solo if they could. Hasler knew he could not do any more and gave orders to proceed. A new series of waves, even more violent than the first, cascaded over the boats, and each man used every ounce of strength they possessed to control the boats and get through the raging maelstrom. One canoe capsized, exposing Corporal Sheard and Marine Moffat to the freezing water. The other canoes were too fragile to accommodate more passengers, so the two lost men clung to a rope and were dragged behind two of the canoes. But the extra weight reduced the speed of the vessels considerably, and after an hour Hasler turned to the frozen soldiers in the water:

"I am sorry, but we have to leave you here. You must swim for it. I am terribly sorry".

for it. I am terribly sorry”.

Sheard, grey with cold, replied: "That's alright sir, I understand. Thanks for bringing us this far".

The men in the water released the ropes. Operation Frankton had been reduced to a total of six soldiers in three canoes.

Hasler noted that only five canoes were left. The commander bent down to pick up his own boat, which he would sail with Marine Bill Sparks.

At 20.20 all five canoes were in the water, and Hasler waved to the submarine's crew, before the canoes set course towards the coast.

The canoes glided silently through the sea in formation, the temperature approaching freezing. However, swift paddling soon warmed the men up, while the exercise slowly loosened muscles that had tightened following the long days spent in the cramped submarine.

MARINES DISAPPEARED

As the group came closer to land they were suddenly surprised by large waves from a tidal race. Hasler was first to steer his canoe towards quieter water and one by one the others popped up at the major's side.

Hasler quickly discovered that Sergeant Samuel Wallace and Marine Robert Ewart were missing. The canoes spread out to look for them, but there was no sign of their colleagues.

“I am afraid you can’t go. You must return home with the submarine”

Hasler to marines whose canoe had been destroyed

FISHERMEN SEE THE BRITISH COMMANDOS

The unexpected encounter with the tidal race disrupted Hasler's schedule, and at the same time the canoes had come too close to the small harbour at Le Verdon and four German patrol boats. Each canoe would have to try and pass one at a time. The first two sneaked unseen through the danger zone into the mouth of the river, pausing to wait for the others when safely through. But the final canoe didn't appear.

There was no time to waste. Daylight was on its way, so the two crews started searching for their first hideaway. On 8th December at 06.30 they tried to land, but a cluster of partially submerged wooden posts near the river bank were in the way. An hour later a suitable place was found, and the four exhausted men dragged their cramped legs onto the

Brits take advantage of tides

Over five days, Major Herbert Hasler's canoe team paddle approximately 100 kilometres up the Gironde and Garonne rivers deep into German-occupied territory. They sail at night, helped by the tide running towards Bordeaux.



Mines were triggered by different coloured switches, depending on when the bomb was going to explode.

1 Canoes launched

7th December, 20.20: five pairs of British Royal Marines launch their canoes from the submarine *HMS Tuna* towards the Gironde estuary in western France. Their aim is to reach the port city of Bordeaux.

The cannon on the front of HMS Tuna served as a crane to hoist the canoes into the water.



2 Britons discovered

8th December, 07.30: the British go ashore to sleep, but French fishermen discover them. Hasler tries to persuade them not to expose the soldiers.

3 Germans fly low

9th December, 05.30: the marines go ashore. But their sleep is interrupted by low-flying German planes; the British can see the pilots.

4 Mines placed

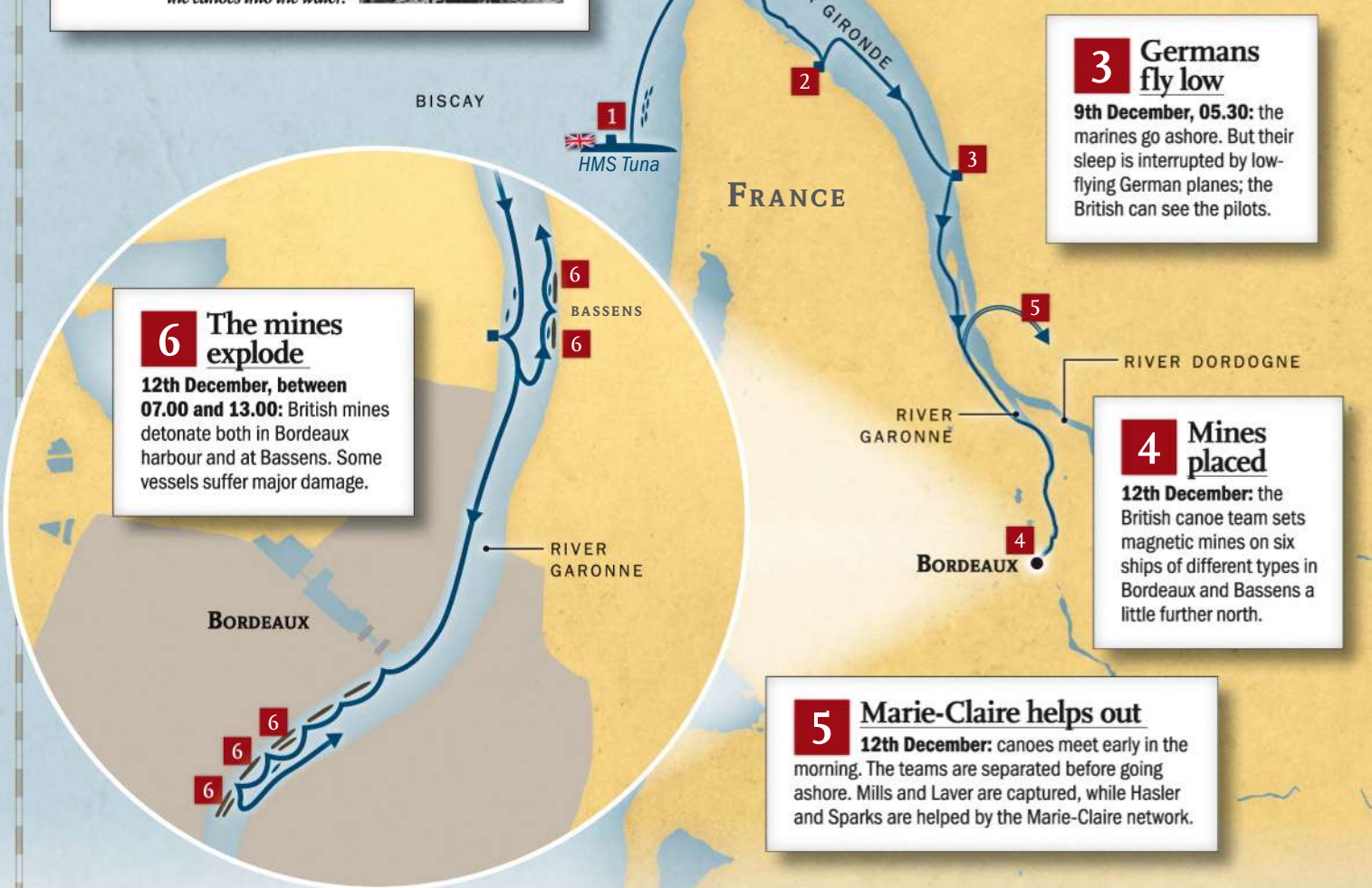
12th December: the British canoe team sets magnetic mines on six ships of different types in Bordeaux and Bassens a little further north.

5 Marie-Claire helps out

12th December: canoes meet early in the morning. The teams are separated before going ashore. Mills and Laver are captured, while Hasler and Sparks are helped by the Marie-Claire network.

6 The mines explode

12th December, between 07.00 and 13.00: British mines detonate both in Bordeaux harbour and at Bassens. Some vessels suffer major damage.



0 10 20 30 40 50 km

The man at the front of the canoe was both captain and helmsman while the mate followed his lead.

- Canoes' route
- Britons' escape over land
- British canoes
- German freight and warships

“Everyone must keep eyes and ears open, and keep hidden during daylight”

Herbert Hasler to the commandos before the operation began

beach. The marines had rowed for 11 hours and travelled 41 kilometres on a ration of biscuits and sweets and were tired, soaked and frozen. The operation had already lost two-thirds of its complement, so the mission now depended on the two remaining crews. The vessels were hidden, and the expedition's equipment covered by camouflage.

The men were looking forward to a rest and some well-deserved sleep when they heard the sound of passing locals from the nearby town of Saint-Vivien. Some of the boats turned suddenly towards shore and headed straight towards the British hiding place. At the same time, sounds came from

a group of women who had settled down to cook less than 15 metres from the commandos. The fishermen ran ashore to join their wives who had lit a small fire. Hasler had the impression that the French were already aware of their presence, so he decided to step forward and introduce himself as a British soldier. In broken French, the commander asked the fishermen not to share their knowledge about the British. The French were sceptical and nervous. They had no idea if the stranger was telling the truth – how could it be? Were there any British soldiers in France?

“We promise nothing, monsieur. We will talk about it, but we promise nothing”, answered one of the fishermen.

Hasler could not get any further so went back into hiding. The French gave the British some bread and left. The marines took turns to eat and sleep, but Hasler was worried that the fishermen might betray them. In addition, he could hear the sound of men working behind a dike nearby: German soldiers might appear at any moment. Fortunately, the British were not discouraged, and so the voyage continued upriver.

The action cost eight lives

Most of those who took part in the operation never returned to Britain. Some drowned while others were executed by the Germans.

Major Herbert Hasler and Bill Sparks survived the campaign in Bordeaux, and the British only became fully aware of the other commandos' fate after the war.

■ The first night they landed **Samuel Wallace** and **Robert Ewart** disappeared and were then captured by Germans the following day. The men were interrogated, but didn't betray their comrades and were later executed.

■ **G J Sheard** and **David Moffat** capsized and were left by the rest of the group on the first evening. They drowned in the Gironde. Moffat's body was found 14th December, 1943; Sheard's body was never discovered.

■ **Jack MacKinnon** and **James Conway** were far from the other canoe team on the Gironde estuary. After four days on the run, MacKinnon and Conway were arrested. The Germans executed the soldiers in Paris in March 1943.

■ **Albert F Laver** and **William Mills** sank two ships, but were caught two days after the explosions. The date of their execution for the sabotage remains unknown.

SABOTEURS SELECTED SHIPS

At midnight on 10th December, the exhausted quartet were tucked away among a forest of reeds where they hid all night

The canoe's flat bottom was necessary so that the vessels could be fully-loaded, but still get pulled ashore.



and through the following day. Hasler reviewed the attack plan and asked the men to secure and configure the mines so they would detonate after a nine-hour delay. The canoe crews were ready for the last part of the trip and wished each other good luck. At 21.15, the vessels slid into the water where they split up.

After an hour and a half, Hasler and Sparks approached the target. On the horizon, the commander could see more ships lit up in the dock. Their exhaustion dissipated. They pulled on their balaclavas and tried to remember their training.

The commandos rowed past a number of vessels looking for a perfect target. First choice fell on a large freighter. Sparks drew the canoe towards the vessel with a magnet, and Hasler reached down and seized the first magnetic mine. With a long pole he placed the explosive charge on the hull of the ship below the waterline.

Hasler was at the front of the canoe, and noticed the increasing flow of tide. He passed the pole to Sparks, who placed another two mines on the ship. The men rowed on until they reached two vessels moored side by side. Hasler could not identify the inside boat properly, but the outermost was a German patrol boat – a perfect target for the marines.

Hasler had five mines left and decided to place two on the patrol boat. As he completed the task, the commandos turned the canoe, but suddenly they heard the sound of metal-tipped boots on the ship's deck. A flashlight swept across the water's surface and almost caught the British. A guard on the patrol boat had apparently suspected something. Hasler and Sparks paddled carefully to the side of the ship letting the tide carry them back along the quay. Both their camouflage and training worked – the guard neither shot at them nor raised the alarm.

The British affixed the last three mines to a freighter and tanker moored next to each other. Without the weight from the mines, the canoe was now very easy to handle. Hasler turned around in his seat and shook Sparks' hand before leaving the harbour.

ESCAPE WAS PROLONGED

As the commandos waited a little further down the river, they suddenly heard a familiar sound behind them. Hasler and Sparks turned around to see the other canoe slide out of the dark. Albert F Laver and William Mills had been busy too; as they reached the commander's boat they said that they had placed five mines on two other ships.

The canoes went along together and at 06.00, Hasler announced that the two teams had to go ashore and fly to Spain individually. A few hours later the mines exploded. Several vessels were seriously damaged, needing major repairs. Hitler was furious, demanding an explanation of how the sabotage could have happened.

Two days after the bombing it all went wrong for Mills and Laver. 30 km inland, a German patrol caught the British pair, who were later executed. Hasler and Sparks fared better. After six days, they made contact with the French, who helped them to Lyon. In March 1943, they continued on to Marseille and from there found a route across the Pyrenees into neutral Spain. Although exhausted and without proper clothing or equipment, the British crossed the mountain range and eventually reached Gibraltar.

The following month, the pair returned to Britain as the only survivors of Operation Frankton.

A woman helped the Allies out of France

Thanks to compatriot Mary Lindell, Herbert Hasler and Bill Sparks were able to escape the occupied part of France to reach safety.

During the flight through France, Hasler and Sparks were helped by fellow Brit Mary Lindell, who went by the code name Marie-Claire. Lindell had lived in France for several years, and in 1940 she began to help Allied soldiers – including downed pilots – to flee from France. Disguised as a nurse, Lindell drove the soldiers to the unoccupied zone in France's southeastern part, where the so-called Pat O'Leary line would allow them to flee to neutral Spain.

The Pat O'Leary line provided passage to Spain via many different routes. Several led across the Pyrenees while others went by ship to Gibraltar. These vessels landed agents in France and then picked up escaped soldiers for the return journey. Hasler and Sparks crossed the Pyrenees, but had to wait because two routes over the mountain range had been exposed. The soldiers only left when a new road was found.

British rescuer Mary Lindell ended up in the Ravensbrück concentration camp late in 1943, but was later liberated by the Swedish Red Cross and arrived in Malmo in April 1945.



After the war, Mary Lindell met a former French resistance fighter.

• • SPECIAL FORCES • •

MILITARY ELITE FIGHT ON THE FRONT LINE

Among the rugged cliffs, in bone-dry deserts and dropped by parachute behind enemy lines, elite soldiers fight in World War II's toughest battles. Both the Axis and the Allies put in specially trained forces to take on the most difficult – and dangerous – missions.

1943



**German Gebirgsjäger during
climbing training in 1939.**
*The corps was deployed to
Lapland, Italy, France and the
Caucasus among others.*

Alpine edelweiss was the emblem on the Gebirgsjäger's characteristic caps.



Gebirgsjäger could cling to steep rock walls and in icy landscapes using an ice pick. The soldiers had lots of mountain equipment, but like light infantry were armed with fewer automatic weapons than other German infantry troops.



Gebirgsjäger in rubber boats paddle across a fjord during the invasion of Norway in April 1940. In addition to their boats, the soldiers were equipped with special equipment such as skis and snow goggles that could aid their advance through Norway's snowy mountains. From 1941, troops often loaded their equipment on mules to make transportation easier.

Goggles shielded
the sun's strong
glare from
the snow.



Metal clamps tightened
under their boots so
Gebirgsjäger could
walk more easily.



“Mountain hunters” conquer Europe's peaks

Wherever the Wehrmacht went in Europe, generals needed German Gebirgsjäger to tackle steep cliffs and high mountains. From Norway in the north to Crete's highlands in the south via the snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus in the east, the specially trained soldiers stepped up in harsh and ever-changing weather. The mountain hunters' roots go back to WWI when Germans established the Alpenkorps, which helped the Austrians against the Italians in the Alps. Because of this, the Germans were allowed to wear the Edelweiss badge, which until then had been reserved for Austrian mountain corps.



The Gebirgsjäger' skill on skis was put to the test during the offensive in the Caucasus in the form of the 5,642-metre-high Mount Elbrus – Europe's highest mountain – which they took in their stride.



The standard-issue gun for the LRDG was the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield no 1 MK III, which the British military introduced in 1907. The Corps was also armed with guns, grenades and small arms that the men had captured from Italian and German troops during operations.



The corps' truck was equipped with solar compasses that were not affected by the metal on their vehicles.



Trucks and jeeps were mainly two-wheel drive so the vehicles were lighter with lower fuel consumption.

LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP

Britons lived in enemy territory

"Not by Strength by Guile", was the motto of the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG). The corps was British and operated as a reconnaissance unit in the Sahara Desert. Their task was primarily to penetrate deep into enemy territory, where the soldiers would observe and report the enemy's positions and movements. Another important task was to transport the special corps (SAS) to and from attacks against the Axis powers. LRDG operated behind enemy lines in the period from December 1940 to April 1943. Although the corps preferred to work undercover, the soldiers also performed some raids. In September 1942, 47 men drove more than 1,800 kilometres in 17 vehicles to attack an Italian air base in the city of Barca in Libya. Here the British destroyed at least 16 aircraft.



Light biplanes brought supplies to outposts scattered over large areas of the desert.

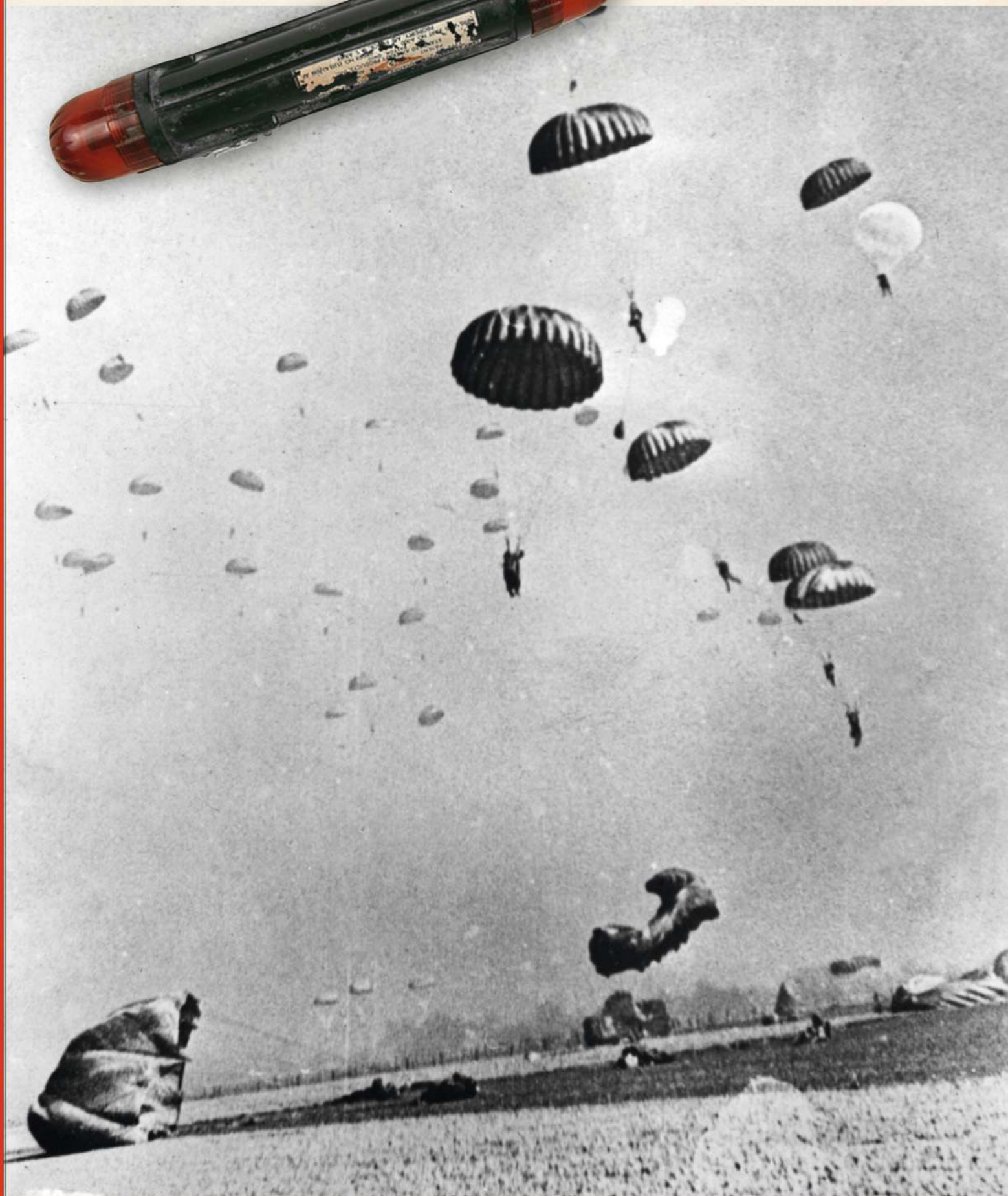


A scorpion in a wheel made up the LRDG logo. Sheets protected both neck and head from the sun.



Patrol vehicles included the Chevrolet WB (30 CWT), shown here driving down a sand dune in March 1941. The vehicle was equipped with a nearly two-metre-tall antenna to the left of the driver that had a range of 800 km and was used to send and receive Morse code.

Battery powered lights lit the way for supplies that were dropped along with soldiers.



More than 9,000 paratroopers from 17th US Airborne Division were dropped into enemy territory near the German town of Wesel for Operation Varsity on 24th March, 1945. The action ensured the Allies could cross the Rhine and invade Nazi-occupied countries.

US PARATROOPERS

Americans came from the sky

In November 1942, United States paratroopers were deployed for the first time. The troops participated in the invasion of North Africa and were later dropped on to battlefields around Europe. Airborne units were a whole new phenomenon in the United States. It wasn't until the middle of 1940 that the US – inspired by German successes – created their own parachute divisions. These participated in both D-Day in 1944 and the invasion of Germany in 1945. The world's largest parachute attack – Operation Market in September 1944 – was a complete failure, however. The Allies dropped 35,000 soldiers in Holland, but had to abandon the mission after major losses.



During training, soldiers learned to take proper defensive position immediately after landing.

The uniform badge was evidence that an American soldier had passed his paratrooper training.



An airborne US unit crossing the English Channel in a transport plane on the way to northern France in June 1944. The night before D-Day, Paratroopers dropped into Normandy to capture roads and bridges before the invasion forces landed on the beaches.

• • OPERATION MINCEMEAT • •

DRESSED TO FOOL THE GERMANS

The British Intelligence Service devises an ingenious plan: a body dressed as a Royal Marine officer holding on to fake military documents. The British hope German agents will find the body and are fooled by the false papers. The plan is about to run its course.

1943

30TH APRIL



*The body was prepared
so it was decomposed
just enough for the fraud
to appear credible.*

THE STAGE IS SET

Spain, 1943



After two years of struggle, Allied troops defeat Rommel's Afrika Korps. The United States and Britain are planning an invasion of Sicily. Its success depends on whether the Germans believe that the invasion will take place elsewhere. The solution is to invent a fictional messenger travelling with fake invasion plans.



THE BRITISH SUBMARINE *HMS SERAPH* is in the pitch-black Atlantic two kilometres from the southern Spanish coast. It's 04.30. On the deck are five naval officers who are examining a metal container that the crew dragged from inside the submarine a few minutes earlier. The seamen have gone back below deck, believing the container contains secret meteorological equipment.

The submarine's commander, Lieutenant Norman Jewell, is the only one who knows what the container actually holds.

29-year-old Jewell has already dodged the issue a couple of times before finally confiding its secret to those who need to know: the metal container on deck holds a body planted by MI5 and Naval Intelligence with a false identity. The body is supposed to represent 36-year-old "Major William Martin" from the Royal Marines.

With concentrated effort, the men force the lid from the container. For a moment, they stiffen at the sight of the decaying body. The man is wearing a Royal Marine uniform and is obviously decomposing.

Lieutenant Jewell bends over the dead body to make sure all the details are right. The corpse's fingers – locked in the throes of death – clutch tightly to a folder full of intelligence service documents. The secret documents in the folder describe the Allies plans for a forthcoming invasion of Southern Europe – fake documents intended to fall into German hands to trick them into believing that the invasion will take place at a different location to the real one.

The chain attaching the folder to the corpse's belt is secured and all the documents are in place. Jewell takes a deep breath



HMS Seraph transported the body to Spain. Seraph was also used in other special missions.



Major Martin was transported in a container with dry ice that evaporated to carbon dioxide as it melted. The carbon dioxide eliminated the oxygen and ensured the body didn't further decay before it was lowered into the sea near the coast of Spain.

Major Martin had bought an engagement ring for his girlfriend at LJ Phillips in London – on credit.

and begins to inflate the dead major's life jacket. When he's done, the five men remove their hats and pray. Then they carefully lower the body into the cold Atlantic water before giving it a gentle push that sends it on the last leg of its journey, the tide steering it toward the Spanish coast. Major Martin is drawn into the war. Only time will tell if he can handle the task.

SICILY WAS AN OBVIOUS TARGET FOR INVASION

One month earlier – in March 1943 – Allied forces had defeated the remains of Rommel's Afrika Korps to take control of North Africa. The next step for the American and British troops was to cross the Mediterranean and gain a foothold in southern Europe. The most obvious place for an invasion was Sicily. The island in the middle of the Mediterranean played a key role and as long as it was in German hands, sailing through the Mediterranean would remain extremely hazardous. German and Italian air forces could easily attack Allied ships from bases on the island.

Of course, the Germans were well aware of the island's strategic importance. And German command was in full swing preparing to fortify the Mediterranean after the fall of Africa. To ensure the invasion, the Allies needed to distract German attention away from Sicily. The enemy needed to be convinced that the attack would happen somewhere else, and therefore lower priority for the defence of Sicily and perhaps even divert troops from the island.

During the spring of 1943, British intelligence worked on plans to fool the Germans into believing that Sicily was not the Allied's invasion target in Southern Europe.

Once a week, a small group of men from various UK various intelligence services met in London to devise a plan. During one of the meetings, naval officer Ewen Montagu had an idea.

"Why", Montagu asked, "shouldn't we get a body, disguise it as a staff officer, and give him really high-level papers which will show clearly that we are going to attack somewhere else?"

The idea was immediately approved by the group, and the operation was given the code name Mincemeat. On the same day, the first decisions were made: the body should look as if it had been involved in a plane crash and washed ashore on the southern Spanish coast near the city of Huelva.

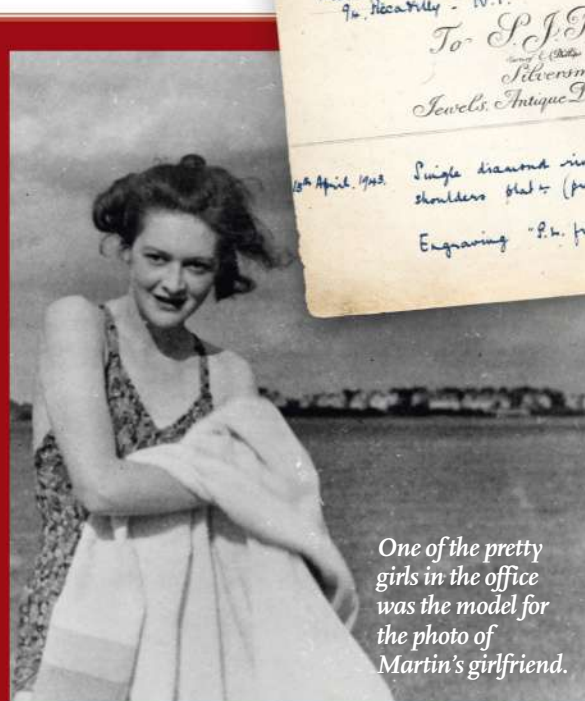
The city was chosen for two reasons: powerful currents coupled with strong tides would push the body onto the coast nearby, and the British knew that a senior German agent collaborated with fascist authorities in the city.

THE BODY'S LUNGS SHOULD BE FULL OF WATER

After the initial meeting, Montagu became responsible for Operation Mincemeat and immediately started working on it. Montagu contacted a well-known forensic officer, Bernard Spilsbury, to acquire knowledge of what the body of a drowned crash survivor might look.

Most importantly, the dead man's lungs should be filled with water to simulate drowning. In addition, the body should bear the harsh impact of the water.

It was difficult to obtain a body that lived up to the requirements. Montagu considered it a paradox to stand in the midst of a war, surrounded by bodies, without being able to find one for the job. Secretly, Montagu pressured London undertaker Bentley Purchase into keeping an eye on



One of the pretty girls in the office was the model for the photo of Martin's girlfriend.

Dead Major was engaged

To make William Martin as credible as possible, the officer had a girlfriend – who flirted with the brains behind the operation.

Creation of an suitable partner for the fictional Major was underway, and when one of the office girls showed a picture of herself to Ewen Montagu, the man running the operation, he knew he'd found the right one.

The girl was called Jean Leslie and she was 19 years old. The photograph originated from a holiday the year before by the Thames and was the perfect picture for William Martin to carry as his girlfriend Pam.

But Montagu and Leslie could not resist the temptation to carry the joke on and write letters to each other, which they signed "Bill" and "Pam". They were also seen out together and maintained contact after the war. Jean Leslie died in 2012 aged 88.

potentially usable bodies. Suddenly the body of a 34-year-old alcoholic appeared. The man died of pneumonia after he had taken rat poison. The cause of death meant that there was liquid in his lungs.

The 34-year-old was a tramp named Glyndwr Michael, who was perfect for the purpose. He was the right age with no close relatives who would wonder what had become of him: any rumour of a missing body could endanger the entire operation.

PERSONAL LETTERS FOOL THE GERMANS

The body was first frozen, and then began the hard work of making Major Martin a reality. First and foremost, Montagu and his team produced a number of documents that would convince the Germans that a future invasion was scheduled to take place in Greece and Sardinia. The

most important document that Major Martin would have in the folder was a personal letter from General Sir Archibald Nye, Deputy Head of the British Supreme Army, to General Sir Harold Alexander, the British Supreme Commander in North Africa.

With a knowing confidence typical of the English upper class, Nye wrote about upcoming troop movements in North Africa and the Mediterranean. After a series of drafts that were not quite right, it was decided to let Nye write the letter himself.

In the letter, General Nye described two different actions: one operation in the western part of the Mediterranean under the code name Brimstone and one in the eastern Mediterranean under the code name Husky. In fact,

Operation Husky was the code name for the real invasion of Sicily, but the hope was that the Germans would perceive all subsequent intercepted radio messages about Husky as part of the fake operation.

As an ingenious psychological trick, Nye also described how the British would make a diversionary attack in Sicily to divert German attention from the actual invasions against Greece and Sardinia.

Another letter that Major Martin had on him was from the Head of British Special Operations, Lord Louis Mountbatten, to Admiral Andrew Cunningham, who was commander of the British Mediterranean Navy. The letter would support the

IDENTITY

Documents the officer carried

Over several months, planners in the intelligence service lived with the fictional Major Martin and eventually felt they knew him intimately.



The keys in his pocket were for both home and work.

A large number of possessions would convince the Germans that Martin was a real person with a normal life.

1 Personal papers

A letter from the family lawyer was among the personal papers that Martin had with him.

2 Identity cards

His birthplace was Cardiff in Wales, and it appeared Martin had the temporary rank of Major.

3 Introduction letter

Major Martin's superior, Lord Louis Mountbatten, described him as shy but very competent.

4 Passport

His passport had expired a few weeks earlier on 31st March – a deliberate mistake.

5 Demand from the bank

Like many others, Martin was in a mess with his finances, and Lloyd's Bank had sent a letter requesting he pay his overdraft of £79.

6 Cigarettes and matches

Like most officers at that time, Martin was a smoker – he preferred Player's Navy Cut.

7 Watch and wallet

Some personal possessions completed the image of a man in his 30s.



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J. S. GWATKIN,
V. E. G. HARRISS.

YOUR REF. MCL/EG.
OUR REF.

19th April 1943.

Dear Sir,

Re your affairs.

We thank you for your letter of yesterday's date returning the draft of your will approved. We will insert the legacy of £50 to your batman and our Mr. Gwatkin will bring the fair copy with him when he meets you at lunch on the 21st inst. so that you can sign it there.

The inspector of taxes has asked us for particulars of your service pay and allowances during 1941/2 before he will finally agree to the amount of reliefs due to you for that year. We cannot find that we have ever had these particulars and shall, therefore, be grateful if you will let us have them.

Yours faithfully,

W. Martin

Major W. Martin, R.M.,
Naval & Military Club,
94, Piccadilly,
London W.1.

first and elaborate on Major Martin's identity as an expert assisting forthcoming naval operations in the Mediterranean. In the letter, Montagu made a joke suggestion that Sardinia was the target to the west: "Let me have him back, please, as soon as the assault is over. He might bring some sardines with him; they are on points here!"

To give his history credibility, Martin's rank would be one high enough for him to carry top-secret documents. As he was too young to be a full major, he became a captain with a temporary rank of major.

MAJOR MARTIN FREQUENTED NIGHTCLUBS

In addition to the official letters, the intelligence service provided a number of practical details –



Charles Cholmondeley (left) and Ewen Montagu were experts in secret operations and planned Mincemeat together.



The objects should be credible and most of the letters were written by the named senders.



Ian Fleming

Ian Fleming, who later wrote the James Bond novels, worked at the office where Operation Mincemeat was planned. Fleming was not directly involved, but contributed ideas. Characters like Miss Money Penny were later created from people in the office.

uniform, folder and ID card all trying to make Major William Martin of the royal navy, born in 1907 in Cardiff, seem credible. Therefore, he was provided with personal letters and papers that would help the Germans to believe Martin to be a real person. He had a girlfriend called Pam, who he had met a couple of months earlier. In his pocket he had a love letter from her and a photo that was in fact of a young secretary from MI5. He also had a receipt for his newly purchased

engagement ring, which was not yet paid for. To emphasise that Martin made mistakes like everyone else, he had a final demand letter from the bank and a passport he had forgotten to renew.

Major Martin also became a man who liked to party. Among his personal effects, he had an invitation to a fashionable nightclub, two used cinema tickets and a receipt from a week-long stay at a hotel.

When all the preparations were finished, Martin was laid on a bed of dry ice in a cylindrical metal container before he was brought aboard the submarine *HMS Seraph*. On 19th April, 1943 *Seraph* travelled from the British base at Holy Loch in Scotland heading for southern Spain.

SPANISH FISHERMEN FOUND BODY ON BEACH

11 days later, Lieutenant Jewell and his colleagues dropped the body of the fake major in the ocean. That afternoon, Spanish fishermen found the body of William Martin off the coast and handed him to the local authorities.

The German intelligence agency in Huelva were informed of the finding immediately and given access to the documents in Martin's folder. The agent photographed the letters, after which he sent them to German intelligence in Berlin. The envelopes were carefully resealed and together with the body, transferred to the British consul by the Spanish authorities.



EWEN MONTAGU

NAME

TITLE MAGISTRATE AND OFFICER

Attorney was an expert in double play

Ewen Montagu joined the British Army in 1938 and soon ended up in a covert operations department. He planned several operations, but Mincemeat was his biggest success. After the war, Montagu wrote a book about the operation, which was made into a film.

- Came from a Jewish family.
- Wrote book on Operation Mincemeat.

1901-1985



Ewen Montagu received the Order of the British Empire for his efforts in Operation Mincemeat.

When Montagu got the letters back, he discovered that they had been opened. A thrilled General Staff sent a short telegram to Winston Churchill, who was in Washington. On the telegram was nothing but a cryptic message: "Mincemeat swallowed rod, line and sinker". Churchill, who had shown great interest in the plan, knew what that meant. Montagu then posted Martin's name to the casualty lists in *The Times* newspaper because he believed the Germans studied it carefully.

That same day, by complete coincidence two other British officers died in a plane crash in the sea near Gibraltar.

The three death notices stood side by side in *The Times* adding to the impression that Major Martin was killed in a plane crash.

On 9th May, news of the discovered documents reached the German Army, who quickly concluded that the documents must be genuine.

Army commander – General Alfred Jodl – concluded that major Allied landings were being planned in both western and eastern parts of the Mediterranean. Jodl informed Hitler that the Allies were preparing to invade Greece under the code name Operation Husky. The intelligence report stated that the target for the operation in the western Mediterranean under the code name Brimstone was likely to be Sardinia. German intelligence also said that the Allies planned a major diversionary attack in Sicily to pull German troops away from actual attack targets.

GERMANS SET UP IN THE WRONG PLACE

Fear of an invasion allowed the Germans to move a whole armoured division from France to the Peloponnese peninsular in Greece. And on 20th May, German Naval Command passed an order for three minefields to be placed off Greece. Shortly after, at the beginning of June, a whole group of patrol boats, miners and torpedo boats were diverted from Sicily to the Aegean Sea.

However, the Germans also built up their troops in the western part of the Mediterranean. They had obviously calculated Sardinia to be the Allies' main goal, while Sicily became less of a priority. Among other things, Hitler ordered the Germans move several troop divisions away from Sicily, leaving the large island relatively unprotected when the Allies invaded on 9th July, 1943. After the landing, British and American forces advanced without encountering much resistance, and even when important cities like Palermo and Messina fell, Hitler was still convinced that it was a diversionary attack. The Führer was so confident in the information that on 23rd July – 14 days after Allied troops landed in Sicily – he sent his trusted General Erwin Rommel to Greece to lead the forces when the main attack took place. Mincemeat really had been swallowed.

Hitler thought genuine plans were fake

After Operation Mincemeat, Hitler feared he'd be deceived again. Therefore he rejected genuine Allied invasion plans as fakes.

Two days after D-Day in June 1944, German reconnaissance units found an abandoned British landing craft on the beach in Normandy. On board were secret documents describing future military targets in the area in detail.

Hitler flatly rejected the information because he believed it was another misleading manoeuvre from the British. At that time, the Führer was still convinced that the main invasion would take place at Calais in northern France. Therefore he refused to move reinforcements to where the fighting was taking place against the invasion forces in Normandy.

In September 1944, a British staff officer left plans for an attack on Holland in a glider. The documents contained a set of orders with maps and drawings describing an upcoming airborne invasion. But Germany's top army command was so convinced that it was misinformation that German troops were moved from the attack targets identified in the documents to a number of other positions.

Hitler would not be fooled twice and planned without regard for any other intelligence.

• • BOUNCING BOMBS • •

DAMBUSTERS SMASH NAZI WAR EFFORT

Under cover of darkness, British bombers head to the Ruhr valley, heart of the Nazi war machine. Underneath the planes hang top-secret bombs designed to destroy three large dams using a technique that's never been tried before. No one knows if the bombs will work in practice.

1943

17TH MAY

Water pressure expanded the bomb-damaged hole in the Möhne dam, so water flowed through an opening 80 metres wide.



THE STAGE IS SET



In early 1942 Albert Speer was appointed Germany's Minister of Armaments. Within a year the former architect has doubled the Third Reich's arms production. A large proportion of the factories' energy comes from huge dams in the Ruhr district. The British are forced to carry out an act of sabotage.



TWO BRITISH BOYS FOUND THEMSELVES witnesses to a strange event in spring, 1943. The boys were playing in a deserted coastal area at Herne Bay in eastern England as large bombers repeatedly swept across the cliffs and out into the North Sea. The boys pressed themselves down in the long grass and from their vantage point watched as the planes dropped bombs out over the sea – bombs that behaved unusually. They skipped across the water several times like skimming stones before exploding beneath the surface to send gigantic water columns high into the air.

The boys had no idea they were eyewitnesses to the final tests of a new secret weapon – a bomb that could hop across

the surface of the water. Just a few days later the invention would be road-tested in one of the most spectacular bombing raids of the entire war: an attack on three dams in the heart of Germany, all protected by murderous anti-aircraft guns.

DAMS WERE THE PERFECT TARGET

The British had been aware of the three major German dams in the Ruhr Valley – Möhne, Edersee and Sorpe – since the outbreak of war. The hydropower stations connected to the dams produced electricity for Germany's heavy industry and were crucial for the Nazis' arms production. In addition, the reservoirs supplied drinking water to millions of Germans.

A bombing raid was no simple task, however. The dams were built to withstand the pressure of millions of tons of water, while the Germans were naturally aware of their strategic importance. Barrage balloons hung over the largest Möhne dam while heavy torpedo nets were deployed behind the dam beneath the water to block torpedoes dropped from enemy aircraft before they could reach the concrete wall. At



During tests up to the night of the raid, the bomb was dropped over open water.

The bomb rotated quickly in an opposite direction to the plane's flight, and skimmed over the water.



the same time, powerful anti-aircraft guns would render any airborne assault something akin to a suicide mission. Only one thing favoured an attack: the Germans would consider it so unlikely they might not be sufficiently vigilant to one.

Despite the fact the RAF had plenty of cold-blooded pilots willing to fly on such a mission, the British needed a brand new weapon. A conventional bomb dropped against the dam could not possibly smash through the construction.

ORIGINAL PLAN WAS MET WITH ANGER

Ambitious engineer Barnes Wallis had spent the entire war trying to work out how to blow a hole in the Ruhr dams. Wallis was convinced a devastating explosion was possible if it occurred below the water level and quite close to the dam.


The creative inventor devised the idea of dropping a bomb from low altitude where it could skip over the torpedo net, hit the top of the dam on the reservoir's side before rolling down the concrete wall below the water line to explode at a predetermined depth.

His theory triggered immediate objections. The bomb would need to be dropped from such a low height that a bomber would need to fly with spotlights to avoid hitting the ground.

"No way", was the angry reply of Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris of Bomber Command. "I will not have aircraft flying about with spotlights on in a defended area. Get some of these lunatics under control and if possible locked up", he raged.

Despite Harris' objections, Charles Portal, head of the Royal Air Force, decided the idea had enough merit to warrant testing. Bombing the German dams was high on his wish list, even though he considered the task almost impossible.

Wallis had built a 1:50 scale model of the Möhne dam and quickly proved



NAME

BARNES WALLIS

TITLE

ENGINEER

1887-1979


Bomb's designer was full of ideas

Barnes Wallis was excited about anything that could fly. From 1913 he worked for Vickers constructing airships and tinkered with aircraft design.

In addition to the bouncing bombs that were used to destroy the dams, Wallis created several other types - not least the so-called "Grand Slam" bomb. The war's most powerful non-atomic explosive targeted the likes of railways and submarine bases.

▶ **Trained as a marine engineer.**

▶ **Worked in the air industry until 1971.**



conventional bombs wouldn't be of much use. Wallis gained permission to experiment on a real dam in Wales, and his trials substantiated his theory that only an explosion underwater and in contact with the dam wall could potentially breach it.

In April 1942, Wallis believed he had the solution to how the weapon should be designed: A rotating spherical bomb dropped from a low-flying plane would hit the water at such an acute angle and with such speed it would skim over the surface.

Two months later, the engineer performed more tests in a large, long indoor pool using tennis ball-sized spheres for bombs. These went so well that the RAF gave him the means to carry out full-scale trials. These took place on a beach in Dorset, and Wallis ordered 150 bombs, each with a weight of four tons. British Avro Lancaster bombers

Designers monitored how the bomb worked in practice by watching from land.

The road to Germany was an obstacle course

The Germans knew that the dams in the Ruhr district were obvious targets, and so the bombers had to navigate through the crossfire of anti-aircraft guns. Only eight out of 19 aircraft reached the target while the rest crashed or had to return.



1 The bombers flew in waves

The planes take to the air on the evening of 16th May, 1943. The first and third waves follow a southerly course across the North Sea, while the second wave takes a northerly route. The planes take different routes to mislead the Germans as to their final goal.

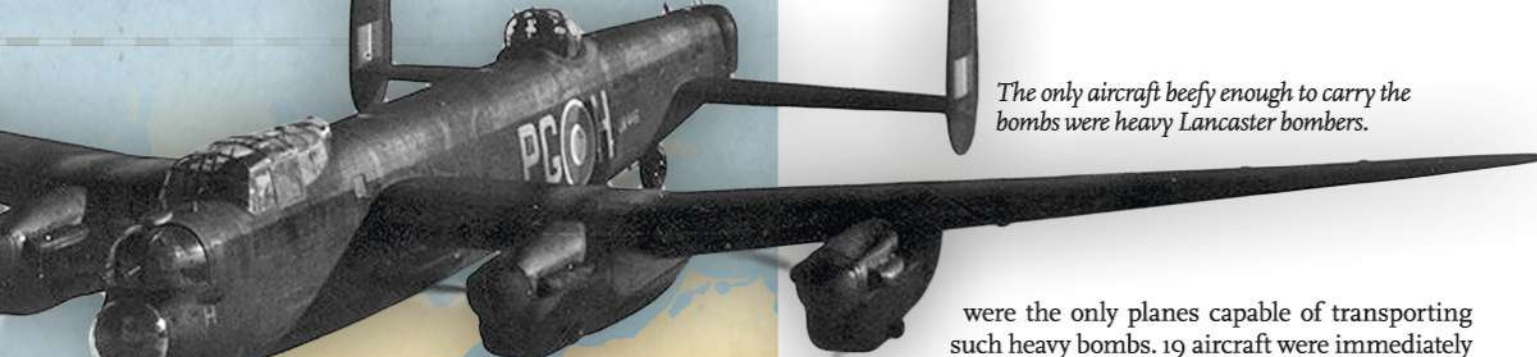
2 Low flight path results in crashes

The attackers fly extremely low to avoid enemy radar. But several Lancaster bombers crash after hitting buildings or power lines.

Guy Gibson

Richard Trevor-Roper

The seven crew members shown boarding the first bomber on the evening of 16th May, 1943.

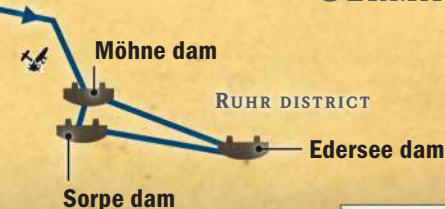


The only aircraft beefy enough to carry the bombs were heavy Lancaster bombers.



HANOVER ●

GERMANY



3 Dams are successfully hit

Despite fierce anti-aircraft fire, the raid successfully blows holes in the Möhne and Edersee dams, while the Sorpe dam is damaged. The destruction is extensive.

Harlo "Terry" Taerum



were the only planes capable of transporting such heavy bombs. 19 aircraft were immediately set aside for extensive modifications, but months passed attempting to develop a special mount without success. Time became increasingly scarce, because the dams ought to be bombed in spring when the amount of water in the reservoirs was at its greatest.

PILOTS TRAINED IN ARTIFICIAL DARKNESS

Finally, in the early spring of 1943, the problems were apparently overcome. Even Bomber Command's Harris was convinced after several successful attempts. On 15th March, 1943, Harris ordered the creation of a whole new squadron. Initially named Squadron "X", 617 Squadron was led by Guy Gibson – he was just 24, but already an experienced pilot.

Ten days later, the squadron began training for the mission, now named "Operation Chastise". From morning to evening, men flew at low altitude across remote Welsh lakes. For security reasons, the crews had no idea what the mission entailed, but they soon realised it was something special.

Pilots and crew received no orders other than that the mission would take place at night. Training had to take place in daylight, however, so Wallis had the opportunity to assess the effect. To simulate darkness, crew members wore sunglasses during training flights, and the cockpit windows were tinted to add to the illusion.

PERFECT TIME APPROACHED

While 617 Squadron practiced flying low in Wales, British fighters performed reconnaissance at a 9 kilometre altitude. Here they were safe from both German planes and anti-aircraft guns. To prevent the Germans from smelling a rat, the planes' routes saw them fly over a wider area than simply the artificial lakes and dams of the Ruhr valley.

The pilots bought back sharp aerial photographs. The pictures showed that the lakes were filled to the brim, but preparations for the raid were a long way from complete.

The training was intensified and for practical reasons moved to Herne Bay in Kent – the very beach where the two boys lay in the grass and watched the bouncing bombs.

The testing of the bombs over open water did not go well, however. The bombs were still spherical, and several of the large planes were seriously damaged when they were hit by water from the exploding bombs. The aircrafts' tails were particularly exposed, and Squadron Leader Gibson reported that the crews barely survived the exercises.

In an effort to improve safety, Wallis changed the bomb's shape from spherical to cylindrical. The design caused the bombs to skim more slowly over the surface of the



617 Squadron was established in 1943 and continued as a unit after the war.

Bombs hopped over torpedo nets

The dangerous mission was code named "Chastise": to punish. Extreme accuracy was required: if the bomb wasn't dropped within three seconds, it would either not reach the target or skip over the dam.

1 Approach takes place under cover of darkness at 400 km/h. The pilot knows he has it right 18 metres above the water when two spotlight cones overlap on the surface of the reservoir.

2 The bombardier sits in the nose of the plane. The bomb must drop between 434 and 388 metres from the dam. The bombardier knows when the distance is correct when the twin towers on the dam overlap two pieces of tape on the plane's window. At that moment he has just three seconds to press the release button.

3 The bomb spins backwards at 500 rpm. The first bounce is approximately 100 metres long. The plane continues forward to get out of range of the explosion as quickly as possible.



The bomb was shaped like a drum to help it skip over the water towards its target.

Motor set the bomb spinning

The bouncing bomb theory was one that no one believed in. Its creator Barnes Wallis code named it "Upkeep", the name referring to the fact the bomb remained airborne thanks to its rotation.

2 The two V-shaped arms of the suspension swing out, and the bomb falls.

3 When it's released, a wire is torn off and the bomb's pressure sensors are automatically activated. The sensors control when the bomb is detonated.

4 The bomb skips over the torpedo net that is stretched about 100 metres from the dam. The net is the reason why bouncing bombs are necessary.

5 The bomb hits the dam. Due to its backwards rotation it slides down the side of the dam.

6 Pressure sensors get the bomb to explode at a depth of nine metres. At the same time, the bomb's timer is set to detonate 90 seconds after being dropped if the sensors aren't working.

7 The explosion breaches the dam wall. The enormous pressure exerted from millions of cubic metres of water widens the hole still further and a giant tidal wave sweeps down the valley.

1 An electric motor with rubber strap starts the bomb spinning.

Rotating bomb

4 The bomb's backspin causes the barrel-shaped charge to skip over the water until it hits the dam.

Flight direction



"Upkeep" bomb



Length	152 cm
Diameter	127 cm
Total weight	4,500 kg
Weight of explosives	3,000 kg
Rotation speed	500 rpm

water, so the planes could get away before the explosion occurred. Nevertheless, further problems remained: one plane dropped its bomb well before schedule, while another plane's mechanism for getting the bomb to rotate didn't work. At the same time, water levels behind the dams slowly sank as each day passed. The less water, the less damage the bombs could inflict.

Despite the setbacks, "Bomber" Harris decided to give the green light, and on the afternoon of 16th May, the crews were informed. Many were left shaken when they realised what their mission was and the risks involved, but there was no time for concern. Shortly afterwards, 19 Lancaster bombers were sent in

three waves with Gibson captaining the front plane. The crews took two different routes across the North Sea with the express order to fly low to avoid enemy radar. One of the planes dipped so low its belly struck the water, the bomb was torn off and the captain forced to return to British shores.

The lack of altitude caused problems over land too. A total of five aircraft crashed after hitting buildings or electric pylons. Power lines in particular could tear a plane in half. Another plane had to turn back after it was hit by German anti-aircraft fire.

DAM APPEARED INVINCIBLE

When the squadron approached the Möhne dam, just 12 of the original 19 bombers were left. The anti-aircraft fire was intense, but Gibson began his attack nevertheless. The time was 00.20.

"As we came over the hill, we saw the Möhne lake. Then we saw the dam itself. In that light it looked squat and heavy and unconquerable", Gibson wrote afterwards.

The bomb from his plane was dropped, skimmed beautifully over the water, hit the dam and exploded below the surface. But it did not cause any visible damage to the massive concrete wall.

Instead of continuing straight on, Gibson pulled his plane off to one side as if he planned to return and attack again. The pilot hoped to draw much of the German anti-aircraft fire on to him and away from the next four bombers when they in turn flew low over the lake and dropped their bouncing bombs. His tactics were a complete success.

Despite this, none of the next three bombs secured full hits. One bounced to such an extent that it leaped over the dam and exploded over the power plant on the other side. At the same time, the plane was shot down. But seconds later came redemption. The fourth bomb burst the huge concrete structure and millions of tons of water poured through the hole, which widened as the pressure increased.

With Gibson in the lead, the remaining planes flew on to the Edersee dam, 10 minutes away. Here there were neither barrage balloons nor anti-aircraft guns, but the dam was in a narrow valley and it took several attempts to blow a hole in it. The third dam at Sorpe proved more robust. Although one of the bombs exploded right next to the dam, the damage was limited.

The trip home took place without any complications. The last plane landed at Scampton Airfield at 06.15, eight hours after starting.

It was only at the debriefing that the survivors discovered the true cost of the operation: of the 133 men who set out, only 77 returned. It was later discovered that 53 perished and three were taken prisoner. The youngest of the dead was Jack Liddell, just 18 years old. 11 out of 19 aircraft returned, but despite the losses, Bomber Command viewed the mission as a success, with two out of the three dams destroyed.

Even though neither headquarters nor the surviving pilots knew how serious the damage was, the RAF nevertheless issued a brief telegram about the operation. In the morning

Flying hero went to United States on lecture tour

The leader of Operation Chastise became a popular hero in both Britain and the US after the raid, but did not survive to the end of the war.

Two days after the raid, Britain's newspaper pages were filled with the story of its incredible success. The RAF enjoyed the attention and were happy to provide maps and aerial photos for editors all over the country.

The operation's biggest hero was Wing Commander Guy Gibson. Although Gibson was only 24 years old when he led 617 Squadron across Germany, he was already a experienced pilot with 172 missions behind him.

After Operation Chastise, Gibson received the Victoria Cross and accompanied Churchill on a trip to the US where he gave a series of lectures. Gibson also wrote a book and was briefly a Conservative Party candidate for Macclesfield before dying in a plane crash in 1944.

Guy Gibson

George VI was enthusiastic about the action and was subsequently briefed personally by Gibson.

George VI



of 17th May, 1943, the British public heard of Operation Chastise for the first time from the BBC.

The next day, a single Spitfire flew across Germany and photographed the destruction. The pilot Jerry Fray was shocked when he saw the sun shining on huge floods in the river valley of the Ruhr district. A few hours later he had landed back in England, and the photos were immediately developed. The evidence left no doubt: the damage was extensive as 330 million tons of water had washed away bridges and left several towns underwater. Several factories

had been put out of action and an entire railway line had been washed away.

The raid proved a nightmare for the Germans. A wall of water several metres high had thundered down the valleys, carrying everything with it, including many forced labourers from the Soviet Union.

The Möhne dam was quickly repaired, while the Edersee dam was rebuilt after the war. But first and foremost, the attack had been a propaganda victory, which demonstrated to the world that the Allies could hit the Germans anywhere.

PERSPECTIVE

Bombing raid severely disrupted Nazi war machine

The Germans immediately started rebuilding the destroyed dams, but the repair work was difficult, and it wasn't until September that the damage was mostly repaired. The Ruhr district's arms factories had lacked a power source all summer, and much precious time had been lost.

The Ruhr dams played a crucial role in the German war effort, so the Nazi regime wasted no time in starting to rebuild them. An army of forced labour, mostly from Eastern Europe, was brought in and forced to work around the clock.

It wasn't simply the dams themselves that were damaged. All bridges 50 kilometres or less downstream of the Möhne dam were also destroyed by the pressure of the tidal wave, and the flow of water had also left a series of buildings in ruins. 12 factories that produced weapons and ammunition were completely destroyed,

while 100 more were damaged. Coal production fell by around 400,000 tons in May compared to the previous month. Large agricultural areas were also destroyed through flooding. The Germans referred to the attack as the Möhne Disaster and even the usually unflappable armaments minister Albert Speer was allegedly shaken.

Reconstruction took around five months. A large proportion of the labour force were people who'd been earmarked to help strengthen Hitler's Atlantic Wall defences. The re-fortifications were delayed, giving the Allies an easier task landing on D-Day.

Floodwaters from the breached dam caused devastation up to 50 kilometres away.

FACTS HIGH PRICE OF BOMBING RAID

Although Operation Chastise was a great success, it was an expensive one in terms of casualties.

Lancaster bombers	19
Crew members	133
Planes safely returned	11
Returned Men	77
Killed	53
Captured	3
Dams destroyed	2
Civilian deaths	1,300

Otto Skorzeny and members of his elite unit posed for this photograph just after liberating Benito Mussolini.

Otto Skorzeny

Benito Mussolini

1943

29TH JULY



•  • COMMANDO ACTION IN ITALY •  •

SPECIAL FORCES LIBERATE MUSSOLINI

In 1943, German gliders swoop down over an uneven and steeply sloping Italian mountain ridge. As they come to a halt, SS commandos and paratroopers leap out of the cramped cabins and storm the Campo Imperatore ski hotel. The action to free imprisoned Italian dictator Benito Mussolini is under way.

THE STAGE IS SET

After Allied forces invade Sicily in July 1943, the Italian fascist government betrays its partner Germany. The country's leader Benito Mussolini is arrested and placed under house arrest. But as the Italians start playing a double game with Hitler, the Führer is determined to do whatever it takes to locate and release Il Duce.



ON 29TH JULY, 1943 SS officer Otto Skorzeny clicked the heels of his boots together and stretched his right arm to greet Adolf Hitler personally. The meeting took place at Wolfsschanze ("Wolf's Lair"), a complex of camouflaged concrete bunkers that made up the Führer's military headquarters in East Prussia.

"I have a mission of the highest importance for you", Hitler said. "Yesterday Mussolini, my friend and our loyal partner in the struggle, was betrayed by his king and arrested by his own compatriots". The Führer continued: "Mussolini must be rescued, and speedily, otherwise they will deliver him up to Allies. I therefore entrust you with this mission; its successful outcome will be of incalculable bearing upon the development of future military operations".

SS UNIT OPERATED BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Otto Skorzeny stood 1.95 metres (6' 6") tall, and the muscular Austrian was head of the SS-Sonderverband zbV "Friedenthal". This was a small group of carefully selected SS soldiers who Skorzeny



Each German parachute regiment had its own set of cufflinks.

had been training since 1942 to carry out espionage and sabotage behind enemy lines. The Friedenthals were weapons and explosive experts, and many had a technical education and spoke foreign languages fluently. During training, these elite soldiers

had to learn to drive various vehicles including motorcycles, locomotive engines and tanks. They also learned to ride, swim and convincingly adopt false identities.

Skorzeny was an engineering graduate from the University of Vienna and an army veteran, playing roles in the invasions of Belgium, Holland and France in 1940 and the Soviet Union in 1941, where he was injured and repatriated. Back in Germany, the Austrian had taken up training the Friedenthals, which were now about to face their first action.

FASCISTS LOST NERVE

On 25th July – four days before Skorzeny's meeting with Hitler – Italy's fascist dictator Benito Mussolini had been set aside in a coup d'état. The Italian king Victor Emanuel and Marshal Pietro Badoglio had ordered Italian police to arrest the dictator after a meeting in the royal palace in Rome. Police officers placed Mussolini into an ambulance and led him to a secret place under tight guard. The official word claimed that Mussolini had voluntarily surrendered power to the king and a new government under Badoglio.

The situation in Italy left Nazi Germany extremely vulnerable. Before the coup, both countries had joined forces in the war, but the new Italian government was playing a double game. It was secretly negotiating peace with the British and Americans, its

Paratroopers with light machine guns supported Otto Skorzeny's operation on the Gran Sasso mountain.



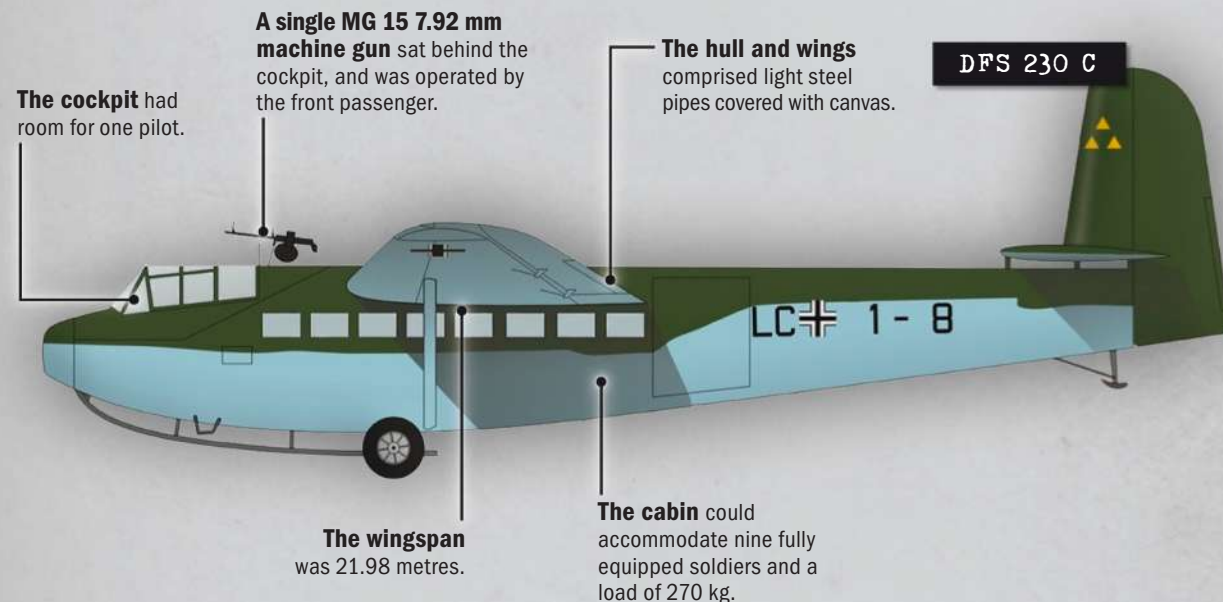
Soldiers glided into battle

Otto Skorzeny's plan to liberate Mussolini would be an airborne operation. After 10 gliders had landed commandos and paratroopers, a small propeller plane would take Il Duce to safety.

Glider stopped in just 20 metres

The DFS 230 transport glider was used in many special operations throughout WWII, not least the liberation of Benito Mussolini. The plane was designed to bring troops directly to a target, allowing the pilot to land via a steep dive. The DFS 230 could stop within 20 metres thanks to a parachute that acted like a brake.

■ Length	11.24 metres
■ Wing area	41.43 m ²
■ Maximum speed (of transport aircraft)	190 km/h
■ Maximum takeoff weight	2,100 kg
■ Crew	1 pilot

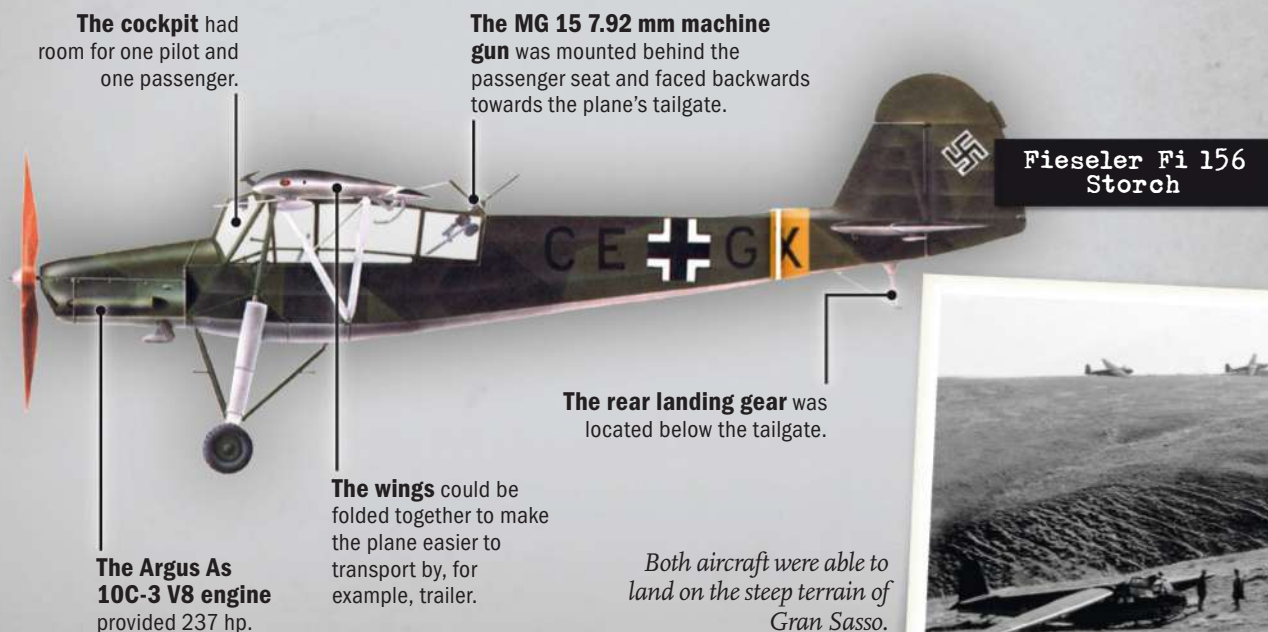


AIRCRAFT

Plane could land on uneven ground

The reconnaissance aircraft Fieseler Fi 156 Storch had landing wheels on the end of long legs with special shock absorbers that allowed the small plane to land on bumpy terrain. In addition, the aircraft was designed to – under normal circumstances – take off over just 60 metres and land within 20 metres.

■ Length	9.9 metres
■ Wing area	26 m ²
■ Maximum speed (of transport aircraft)	175 km/h
■ Maximum takeoff weight	1,325 kg
■ Crew	1 pilot



Both aircraft were able to land on the steep terrain of Gran Sasso.



Plan B came into action

During the operation at Gran Sasso, Skorzeny was forced to abandon his original plan: bring Mussolini down by cable car and fly him from the valley below the hotel. He therefore launched Plan B, which meant flying directly from the mountainside.



The cable car was the only practical transport between the hotel and the valley below.

1 The glider with Skorzeny lands, and he immediately runs up to the hotel Campo Imperatore. After a short while he finds Mussolini.

Campo Imperatore

2 The other gliders land on a wider area around the hotel. One of the planes crashes.

4 At the end of the improvised runway, the plane disappears over the steep slope before finally straightening up.

3 The Fieseler Fi 156 Storch aircraft lands and, shortly after, Mussolini and Skorzeny get on board – ready to depart.



goal to pull the country out of the war. But publicly it continued to assure Hitler that Italy would fight beside its German ally to the end. The “promise” revealed Italy’s fear of German reprisals and a possible Nazi occupation of the Italian mainland.

The Führer raged over the fact his friend and ally had been removed in a coup. He still had German troops in Italy and his immediate thought was to occupy the country by force, locate Mussolini and reinstate him. But with only around three army divisions to call on, Hitler had to rein in his anger and desire for revenge against the coup plotters. He also feared the Italians would turn against him if he retaliated too violently. But at the same time, the German dictator suspected the king and Badoglio would be negotiating a secret peace with the Allies. If Italy surrendered, the Allies would easily occupy southern Italy and open up another front against Germany. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had even called Italy “Europe’s soft underbelly”.

RUMOURS WERE BUZZING

Peace talks between the Italians and the Allies were drawn out, and in the meantime Hitler swiftly reinforced his presence in Italy, increasing German troops from three to eight divisions. Many were immediately in combat, particularly south of Naples, where the Americans had landed. Other German forces moved to disarm one million Italian soldiers. The king and Badoglio fled from Rome to southern Italy to come under Allied protection. The Germans now occupied northern and central

Italy while the British and Americans were laying claim to the south. Somewhere in this storm, Mussolini remained under the guard of the Carabinieri, Italy’s military police. Badoglio had given them a clear order: Mussolini must be shot if the Germans tried to free him. It was a nightmare situation for Skorzeny. His reputation with Hitler depended on whether it would be possible to find and free Mussolini before the Italian ex-dictator was shot or handed over to the Allies. The German Führer hoped that a liberated and reintegrated Mussolini would bring Italy back over to the Nazis.

Immediately after his meeting with Hitler on 29th July, Skorzeny travelled to Italy where he was to work with German agents and General Kurt Student, who was commander of Germany’s paratroopers. They had tracked down Mussolini, who was interned on the small island of Ponza just off the coast from Naples, but by the times the Germans had arrived, Il Duce had been removed.

Throughout August, conflicting rumours circulated as to where the ex-dictator was being held. Many were spread by Italian intelligence service agents loyal to Badoglio and the king. For weeks the Germans pursued false trails, but suddenly credible rumours emerged that Mussolini was being held in a large villa on the small island of La Maddalena off Sardinia.

THE BIRD HAD FLOWN

A German soldier who spoke fluent Italian was sent to the island disguised as a sailor to talk to the locals. He challenged

Paratroopers

were first used as part of the invasion of Denmark in 1940 when German soldiers parachuted into key locations. The troops captured, among other things, Aalborg Airport.

some Italians to bet on where Badoglio had hidden Mussolini. A local fruit supplier accepted the wager and revealed that Mussolini was in a secluded villa. The soldier spied on the villa and found that the site was guarded by around 150 Carabinieri. In addition, a Red Cross seaplane was anchored off the coast near to the villa.

Skorzeny immediately began to plan an operation including seaplanes and high-speed motorboats. But before he could get his men, vehicles and equipment into place, Mussolini was moved for the second time.

Shortly after, the Germans scouted the villa again only to find the Red Cross seaplane had gone and the guard cut to just a few men. The bird had been spirited away from under Skorzeny's nose, and the Italian word "fiasco" rang in his ears. The search would have to restart from scratch; Mussolini could once again be anywhere.

RADIO MESSAGE REVEALED HIDING PLACE

Around the beginning of September, the Germans struck gold again when one of their surveillance units intercepted an interesting message in Italian: "Security measures around Gran Sasso completed. Cueli". The message was duly sent on to General Student's headquarters in Frascati, just outside Rome. Student initially dismissed the message because of earlier false trails, but when he and Skorzeny inspected a water aerodrome on Lake Bracciano to the north of Rome on 4th September, the paratrooper commander heard from an eyewitness who saw both an Italian Red Cross seaplane land on Bracciano and then, shortly afterwards, an ambulance drive off in a convoy of other cars.

Student immediately linked the Red Cross seaplane back to the villa at La Maddalena, at which point the radio transmission also came to mind. Gran Sasso forms part of the Appennine mountain range that runs down the Italian peninsula. On a plateau 2,100 metres above sea level lay the ski hotel Campo



The FG 42 rifle was developed for German paratroopers and was first used during the liberation of Mussolini.

Imperatore, accessible only by cable car. The height at Gran Sasso was critical: the paratrooper commander knew that the air was too thin and wind conditions too unstable to allow paratroopers to be dropped over the hotel. The cable car couldn't be used either – the journey up to the hotel would take at least 10 minutes, plenty of time for them to be spotted by the Italians. Both Student and Skorzeny knew that surprise was essential. The guards had to be overpowered before they could get to the ex-dictator.

Only one very special kind of operation – never previously attempted – could liberate Mussolini. The Germans would have to land on a rocky mountain ridge using gliders. The planes consisted of metal rods covered with canvas, and during a landing, the machines slid on long metal rods along the hull to bring themselves to a halt. But the gliders were

Skorzeny's facial scar was inflicted during a rapier duel he fought as a student in Vienna.



1908-1975



NAME

OTTO SKORZENY

TITLE

SS-SONDERVERBAND ZBV "FRIEDENTHAL" COMMANDER

Hitler's master of manhunts

The liberation of Benito Mussolini from his captivity atop the Gran Sasso mountain would not be the last time Austrian Otto Skorzeny was given a personal task by his Führer. Shortly after the operation, Hitler ordered the commando to go to France and capture Vichy leader General Philippe Pétain. That assignment was cancelled as was a similar mission to kidnap General Charles de Gaulle. Later, Hitler again gave one dangerous task for Skorzeny: capture Yugoslav rebel leader Josip Tito. Although the manhunt was unsuccessful, the Austrian came close to getting Tito in his claws too.

After the failed assassination attempt on Hitler in 1944, Skorzeny again acted as the Führer's troubleshooter: he spent 36 hours in command of the entire Wehrmacht as he helped to put down the coup d'état.

- Kidnapped the Hungarian leader's son in 1944.
- Escaped prison in 1947 and spent time in Spain, Argentina and Egypt.

The Storch plane landed without difficulty on the mountain side. Its departure, on the other hand, was more dramatic.



designed to land on relatively flat grassy surface, not a sloping mountain ridge. Undeterred, Skorzeny and Student immediately began to plan their assault on Hotel Campo Imperatore. They sent to Germany for gliders, while Skorzeny – along with his adjutant Karl Radl – climbed aboard a bomber equipped for aviation photography.

The flight gave the German commando an impression of the area surrounding the ski hotel. But Skorzeny discovered that the plane's camera wasn't working when he boarded. When the bomber flew over the mountain at a height of 5,000 metres, Skorzeny was forced to open a hatch and lean his upper body out into the ice-cold air. Radl held on to his ankles to ensure his superior didn't fall out.

Using a handheld camera, Skorzeny snapped pictures of the plateau where Campo Imperatore was located. When the images were developed, however, the quality was so poor that Skorzeny and Radl couldn't discern much from them. They were able to determine that the hotel appeared to be situated on flat ground. Skorzeny's only other form of reference was a tourist brochure from the hotel, but its photos weren't very detailed. It meant Skorzeny was unable to formulate a comprehensive outline of the Hotel Campo Imperatore. He didn't know where doors and entrances were located or how the interior was laid out.

SS COMMANDO TOOK THE LEAD

Air reconnaissance of Campo Imperatore took place on 8th September. The same day, the Allies broadcast news that the Italian government had signed a ceasefire, signalling their unconditional surrender. Italy now sided itself with the Allies and became – at least on paper – the Germans' enemies.

Time was now scarce for Skorzeny and his men who feared that Mussolini would now be handed to the British and Americans. But the gliders had to be transported from Germany, and would only arrive in Italy on the morning of 12th September.

The plan was that the planes would fly the same day they arrived from Pratica di Mare, a little south of Rome, to Gran Sasso. The trip was calculated at 60 minutes. A few hours earlier, a column of soldiers on motorcycles, cars and trucks would drive to – and then capture – the cable car's base station, located in the Aquila valley. The glider landing on the mountain and the attack on the cable car station in the valley would need to be synchronised to ensure the Germans didn't lose the element of surprise. The



Mussolini is shown climbing on board the small plane that spirited him from captivity.

SS soldiers and paratroopers waved a jubilant farewell to the former Italian dictator.





MISSION'S SPECIAL FORCES

FACTS

Two of the Nazi's most talented special forces participated in the rescue of Benito Mussolini.

■ **SS-Jägerverbände Friedenthal** were soldiers trained in espionage and sabotage behind enemy lines. It was the first German corps to use silenced weapons.

■ **Paratroopers** were soldiers trained to jump out of planes at extremely low altitude (100-150 metres above ground) to avoid becoming an easy target for enemy fire as they hung in the air.

gliders would be drawn by propelled aircraft using long steel wire ropes and finally arrived in Italy late in the morning of the 12th. As the gliders arrived at Student's air base, equipment was to be immediately loaded onboard, but their departure was delayed as the air raid siren suddenly sounded and Allied bombers attacked the runway. Luckily for Skorzeny, none of the aircraft had been hit, and the mission could proceed at 13.00.

10 gliders in all departed from the base, each carrying 10 men including the pilot. Two gliders were manned with Skorzeny's men, while the others housed Student's paratroopers. Along the way, the convoy would have to pass over the foothills of the Apennines. The two gliders leading the way swung around in a big circle to gain altitude before passing over. But the gliders following missed the manoeuvre because they were still inside a cloud bank. It was only when the clouds parted that they discovered the first two aircraft had vanished. In the third was Skorzeny, and when his pilot asked who would now lead the convoy, Skorzeny answered: "We'll take over the lead ourselves!" The remaining gliders fell into line and all flew over the Apennines without problem.

THE GLIDERS WERE RELEASED

With a knife, Skorzeny cut holes in the glider's canvas to determine how far the convoy had come. Underneath, the commando watched as the motorcycles from the column that were to attack the cable car station made their way up the Aquila valley. Everything had gone to plan so far, except the first two planes had now fallen behind because of their circling manoeuvre in the foothills.

Skorzeny's glider also contained the Italian General Fernando Soleti. The general had reluctantly agreed to

participate in the risky action; his task was to persuade the 200 or so Italian guards to spare Mussolini. Through scattered clouds, Skorzeny was able to determine that the air convoy was

approaching Gran Sasso and the hotel. "Slip the tow ropes!" he shouted to the pilot. The plane that towed Skorzeny's glider through the air disappeared, leaving just the noise of the wind behind. Both the glider pilot and Skorzeny examined the landing zone. The area looked relatively flat from the aerial photos taken, but now the crew could see its incline was more

like a ski slope. Nevertheless, the pilot set the glider down so it could slide down the slope to a halt. The sound of tearing canvas, grinding metal rods and the scrape of the hull over stony ground, cut through the crew's ears.

By chance, the glider – by now almost completely destroyed – stopped just 15 metres from one corner of the hotel. Skorzeny and his men leaped out of the glider – its door had been ripped from its hinges during landing – and stormed the hotel. "Hands in the air!" they yelled in Italian to some startled guards. The reluctant General Soleti was ushered out of the

plane, shouting with the full force of his lungs, "Don't shoot!"

Skorzeny then ran through the nearest door, where he discovered a radio operator sitting on a chair. The Austrian kicked the chair from under the Italian and smashed the radio with the butt of his machine gun. The radio room led nowhere, so Skorzeny quickly exited. He then ran around the back of the hotel looking for an entrance. He found a

Storch

The name of the Fieseler Fi 156 aircraft means "stork" and referred to the landing gear on which the wheels sat, which resembled the long legs of a stork.

DICTATOR HUNT

COMMANDER FOLLOWED MUSSOLINI'S TRACKS FOR WEEKS

1943

25TH JULY

Benito Mussolini is forced to resign after a meeting at the king's palace in Rome. He's immediately arrested and held on a Mediterranean island.



A stamp from 1938 celebrated the Italian-German alliance.

29TH JULY

SS officer and commando Otto Skorzeny meets with Hitler and given orders to find and free Mussolini.

AUGUST

Skorzeny and paratrooper commander Kurt Student start searching for Mussolini in Italy and trace him to the island of La Maddalena before Il Duce is whisked away.

1ST SEPTEMBER

The Germans pick up a radio message about Gran Sasso, which later puts Skorzeny and Student back on Il Duce's trail.

4TH SEPTEMBER

Student and Skorzeny inspect a water aerodrome on Lake Bracciano north of Rome. The Germans discover that Mussolini probably landed on the lake recently.

9TH SEPTEMBER

Italy signs a ceasefire agreement, where it surrenders unconditionally to the Allies.

12TH SEPTEMBER

Skorzeny releases Mussolini from Gran Sasso and flies with the former dictator to Vienna.

23RD SEPTEMBER

Mussolini is pronounced leader of German puppet state The Salò Republic in northern Italy.

Mussolini came to power long before Hitler in 1923. The Führer was initially an admirer of fascist Italy.

Adolf Hitler

Benito Mussolini

terrace at the end of the wall – a pair of German soldiers lifted him onto it, where he found himself at the front of the hotel. Running along he spotted an unmistakable bald profile in a second-floor window: Mussolini. Skorzeny immediately shouted, "Duce, get away from the window!" The commander feared the former dictator might get caught in any crossfire.

The Austrian and his SS troops came to the main hotel entrance, where a couple of Italian soldiers were standing guard with machine guns. But before the Italians could react, they were thrown aside by the tall, muscular Skorzeny. Not a single shot had been fired. Inside the foyer, the Italians were panicking. Any carabinieri who tried to block Skorzeny were pushed aside and held back by SS commandos.

Skorzeny ran up the stairs with one of his officers at his heel. When the Germans reached the second floor, Skorzeny passed through a door to one of the hotel rooms. In the room stood Mussolini guarded by two Italians, whom Skorzeny's officer quickly bundled out into the hallway with his machine gun.

"Duce, the Führer has sent me! You're free", Skorzeny told Mussolini. The ex-dictator immediately embraced his rescuer: "I knew my friend Adolf wouldn't desert me".

Only four minutes had passed from the second Skorzeny ran out of the glider to the moment he stood before Mussolini. Outside, the other gliders had landed or were in the process of landing. From an Italian perspective, it had been a terrifying sight because the gliders emerged suddenly from the clouds before landing quickly with a shattering sound. The Germans troops then swiftly stormed both the hotel and the upper cable car station. Everywhere, Italian carabinieri were too paralysed to do anything but surrender.

At the same time, the motorised German column had seized control of the cable car station in the valley – here, two Italians were killed during the battle. On the mountain one of the gliders crashed to the ground through a sudden gust of wind. Several on board were severely injured, but all survived.

SKORZENY WAS TOO HEAVY

A Fieseler Storch – a flimsy single propeller plane designed for one pilot and one passenger – arrived at Gran Sasso at 15.00. The plane would deliver Mussolini to the airport at Pratica di Mare, but Skorzeny insisted on flying too. The pilot, who only managed to land with difficulty on the mountain ridge, had other ideas, refusing to take anyone other than Mussolini. He pointed out that the Italian weighed more than the average passenger, and that Skorzeny was also too heavy. The fact the plane would have to lift off from a rocky hillside

made it dangerous enough with just a single passenger onboard, but after some discussion, Skorzeny persuaded the pilot to take both him and Duce. Mussolini took the passenger seat, while Skorzeny squeezed himself into the cramped space behind. The Storch had decent suspension, but not much horsepower. It set off bumping down the hillside easily enough, but suddenly the pilot spotted a ditch. He pressed the throttle as if to take off and the plane “jumped” over the ditch, after which the wheels once again bumped over the slope. The German soldiers on the mountain stared nervously at the plane as it reached a point where the slope became even steeper. They watched the plane swoop over the edge, but just as they feared the worst, the plane lifted its nose and continued down the valley.

When the Storch landed at Pratica di Mare, Mussolini and Skorzeny boarded a transport plane bound for Vienna Airport that night. From here, the odd couple travelled on to the

upmarket Hotel Imperial, where they were initially turned away by the receptionist. But when the concierge learned they'd reserved rooms under the name of Mussolini, he quickly served them. The deposed dictator immediately went to bed, but Skorzeny stayed up to celebrate his success with a glass of wine.

Evita Perón

became Otto Skorzeny's mistress in Argentina after WWII. When her husband Juan Perón escaped from the country in 1955, he received help from Skorzeny.

HITLER REWARDED SKORZENY

Shortly after, the phone began to ring. The first congratulations came from SS commander Heinrich Himmler. Then Hitler himself called, promoting Skorzeny from Hauptsturmführer (Captain) to Sturmbannführer (Major). Later, Hermann Göring rang, and a German colonel in Vienna arrived at Hotel Imperial to personally deliver

the Iron Cross military order to the commando.

Otto Skorzeny had become the Nazi's most famous war hero – and even the British would express a reluctant admiration for his bold and successful rescue operation.

Il Duce was made Hitler's puppet dictator

Adolf Hitler needed Mussolini in the struggle against the Allied forces that advanced south through Italy. The German Führer reinstated the dictatorship in the northern half of the country – but Il Duce was placed under strict German control.

Only 11 days after the liberation of Gran Sasso, Benito Mussolini was back in Italy, where he had German support in creating a new state in the northern half of Italy. The state was called the Salò Republic after the city where Mussolini established his new government.

However, Il Duce was a shadow of himself. At their first meeting in the Wolf's Lair after the successful liberation operation Hitler was shocked to see how dishevelled and emaciated Mussolini had become. In addition, the deposed dictator seemed unwilling to pursue those who had overthrown him.

Mussolini found himself kept on a short leash, little more than a Nazi puppet, and parts of the Republic were under direct German control. In addition, Hitler demanded that Il Duce execute some of those fascists who'd betrayed him.

By the start of 1945, Allied forces had advanced deep into the Salò Republic, and on 28th April, Mussolini was caught and executed by Communist Italian Partisans.


Mussolini's soldiers sided with the Germans in the Battle of Anzio south of Rome in the first half of 1944.

PERSPECTIVE



Posters from the Salò Republic promised that Germany was Italy's friend.

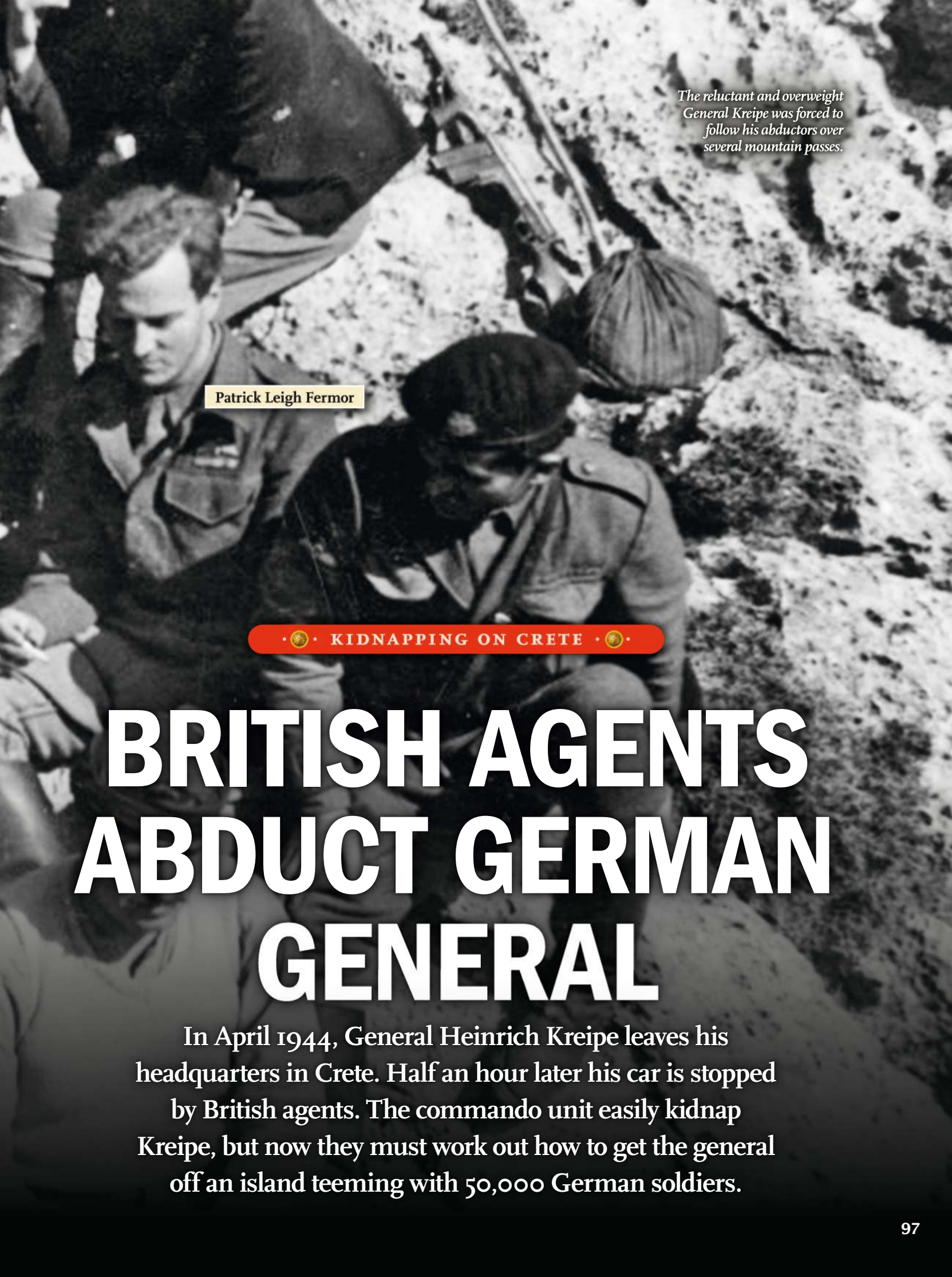


A black and white photograph showing several soldiers in a trench. In the center, a soldier in a beret sits with his hand to his face. To his right, another soldier is seated, looking down. In the foreground, another soldier in a beret is visible, looking towards the camera. The background shows the rough, rocky walls of the trench.

Heinrich Kreipe

William Stanley Moss

1944 26TH APRIL



The reluctant and overweight General Kreipe was forced to follow his abductors over several mountain passes.

Patrick Leigh Fermor

• 🪖 • KIDNAPPING ON CRETE • 🪖 •

BRITISH AGENTS ABDUCT GERMAN GENERAL

In April 1944, General Heinrich Kreipe leaves his headquarters in Crete. Half an hour later his car is stopped by British agents. The commando unit easily kidnap Kreipe, but now they must work out how to get the general off an island teeming with 50,000 German soldiers.

THE STAGE IS SET



In 1941 Germany occupied the Greek island of Crete in the Mediterranean. The Nazis face determined resistance from the islanders and the occupation forces kill hundreds of people in reprisals. To strengthen Greek morale and create uncertainty among the Germans, the Allies decide to abduct the island's commander.



NINE PAIRS OF EYES STARED INTENTLY INTO THE DARK. The time was 22.30 on 26th April, 1944 and General Heinrich Kreipe was an hour late. A creature of habit, the general usually left his headquarters at 20.00 to arrive home at Villa Ariadne in Knossos about half an hour later. Perhaps this was one of those evenings where he'd remained at headquarters to play bridge late into the night, as he'd done several times before.

Next to the road outside Knossos, nine men huddled against the cold spring wind chain-smoking as they debated whether to cancel the operation. Just as they were about to give up, they heard the sound of an engine in the distance. Two strong headlight beams lit up the dark and two of the men, Patrick "Paddy" Leigh Fermor and William Stanley Moss, jumped out of the ditch. Guns primed, the men stood resolutely in the middle of the road. Moments later, they were bathed in the light of an Opel car, which slowed down. Leigh Fermor roared "Halt!" and the car came to a stop.

"Is this the general's car?" Leigh Fermor asked in flawless German as he bent down to peer through the windscreen. The driver studied Leigh Fermor quizzically and his eyes slid over to Stanley. He observed that both were wearing German police uniforms and muttered an affirmative: "Yes, yes".

The confirmation saw people rush forward from all sides at the same moment, and things moved quickly. Leigh Fermor and one of his helpers pulled the general from the car, while Moss took care of the terrified driver, who reached for his machine gun. Before he could get hold of the weapon, the driver was hit on the head by Moss's truncheon, and slumped lifelessly over

the wheel. Moss wasted no time in dragging the man out of the car, accompanied by angry outbursts from General Kreipe, who resisted with all

his might as his kidnappers attempted to pull him out of the passenger seat. Only when a knife was placed against Kriepe's throat did he stop, and quickly found himself stowed into the back seat. In a daze he repeated, "Where is my hat? Where is my hat?"

Relieved that the first act of the operation had succeeded, Moss got behind the wheel with Leigh Fermor next to him. In the back seat, three Greek resistance fighters kept the rebellious general in check.

15.000

German paratroopers participated in the invasion of Crete in May 1941. At the time it was the largest parachute operation in history. Around 2,000 died.

GERMAN BUTCHER FUELLED HATE

Ever since the Germans occupied Crete in May 1941, the island's resistance movement had fiercely fought against the Nazi forces. Hatred of the Germans permeated through every village and hamlet on the Mediterranean island. The relationship between both sides was not improved by the Germans enacting bloody reprisals every time the island's partisans resorted to sabotage. The Nazis

threatened to execute 10 Cretans for every dead German, and by early 1944 the island had been ravaged by fighting. Towns had gone up in flames, the cemeteries were full up, and entire families had fled up into the mountains. One man disgusted the islanders in particular: General Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller, known as the Butcher of Crete.

The Allies followed developments in Crete with concern, and at the British military headquarters in the Egyptian capital of Cairo, a decision was made to remove General Müller. They appointed two agents – Patrick Leigh Fermor and William Stanley Moss – to carry out the task with the support of partisans in Crete.

The action was, however, delayed after several failed attempts to parachute on to Crete. While Leigh Fermor had the good fortune to land, Moss and two Greeks – George Tirakis and Manolis Paterakis – were forced to sail to Crete's south coast after 13 unsuccessful flights.

A reception committee awaited the men on the beach, which included a crowd of local partisans as well as Leigh Fermor himself. In a surprisingly short period of time, the agent had transformed into a native – he face was browned by the sun and he'd grown a moustache. Leigh Fermor quickly revealed that the plans had changed. General Müller had been replaced just over a month ago, but



German paratroopers dropped on to Crete from a low altitude.

assuming that one German general was as good – or as bad – as another, he suggested abducting his replacement, Karl Heinrich Kreipe, instead. Kreipe led the German 22nd Sevastopol (Bremen) Division, which operated in Crete.

In the days leading up to the kidnapping, the group headed north to Crete's largest city Heraklion, a journey that took them over mountains, through dried-out river beds and across thyme-scented plains. Nights were spent in caves or in friendly houses where they were plied with goat's milk, eggs, fried figs and – not least – the local brandy, raki.

A Greek secret agent from Heraklion, "Micky" Akoumianakis, met up with the company. Akoumianakis owned a house in Knossos next door to the general's villa and was closely following his movements. He assumed the task of spying on the general with Leigh Fermor, while the rest of the company established a base in the mountains.

OPERATION REQUIRED CAREFUL PLANNING

The initial plan was to abduct the general from his villa, but Akoumianakis' and Leigh Fermor's reconnaissance revealed it would be virtually impossible. The Villa Ariadne was enclosed by three rows of electric barbed wire and closely watched. Their only option was to kidnap Kreipe on his way home from work at his headquarters, a little south of Heraklion.

It took several hours of discussion and planning for the operatives to formulate what would happen after the kidnapping: Leigh Fermor would wear the general's cap and act as an officer, while Moss drove the car – with the captured general in the back – past the numerous German sentries in

Heraklion and along the west coast. At a specific village, the three men would abandon the car and escort the general on foot towards Mount Ida where they would rendezvous with the rest of the men involved in the kidnapping, who in the meantime would have taken care of the car's driver. They'd then meet up with an agent on the mountain with a radio transmitter who'd inform Cairo that the general was ready to be picked up.

To gain extra time and confuse the Germans, Leigh Fermor and a Greek would drive the general's car on to a deserted beach that had previously served as a port of call for Allied submarines. The idea was to trick the Germans into

Real Name: Major LEIGH FERMOR Interrogated by: Capt. BUHR
Cover Name: MICHAELIS FRANGIHELAKIS " on:
Serial No: G.K. 2

MISSION: Source was in CRETE from June 1942 to September 1943, 5th February 1944 to 16th June 1944, and October 1944 to 24th December 1944. His general mission was to take over command of Eastern CRETE (East of RETIMO to SITEA) from Colonel DUBABIN. He took over the whole of the island from August 1942 to December 1942. His main duty was to collect information, organise intelligence services and the Resistance, and to contact the local leaders and organise the reception of stores.

1st & 3rd Missions: His orders were:

- 1) Military, naval and air information for targets for RAF, commando raids, and submarine.
- 2) Sabotage of shipping.
- 3) Relief. Supplying food and boot leather by sea and air.
- 4) Maintenance of Cretan morale by leaflets, by organising a service of wireless sets in each county and disseminating the news received by runners.
- 5) Propaganda by leaflets, rumours, etc. attacking the German and Italian morale.
- 6) The evacuation of stragglers left behind from the British Expeditionary Force.
- 7) Contacting Cretan leaders and forming the nuclei of Resistance groups and bands. Arming and equipping them with supplies dropped by air or landed from the sea.
- 8) Forming a network for disseminating orders in the event of an Allied landing.
- 9) Arbitrating in internal quarrels whether political or family, such as blood feuds.

2nd Mission: To kidnap General KRIEPE, Divisional Commander of 22nd Panzer Grenadier Division (HERAKLION-SEVASTOPOL Division). This was successfully carried out.

The report on Patrick Leigh Fermor's action noted soberly that the kidnap of General Heinrich Kreipe was a success.



William Stanley Moss

Patrick Leigh Fermor

Manolis Paterakis

believing the abductors had already left the island with Kreipe. To convince the enemy that the locals played no part in the kidnap, a false trail would be left in the car in the form of a British commando beret and greatcoat, plus some empty English cigarette packets. On the front seat would be a letter to the German authorities: "Your Divisional Commander, General Kreipe, was captured a short time ago by a British raiding force under our command. By the time you read this, both he and we will be on our way to Cairo. We would like to point out most emphatically that this operation has been carried out without the help of Cretans or Cretan partisans... Your General is an honourable prisoner of war, and will be treated with all the consideration owing to his rank. Any reprisals against the local population will be wholly unwarranted and unjust".

CAR'S PENNANTS SMOOTHED WAY

So far, everything had gone to plan, and Kreipe had resigned himself quickly to his predicament – possibly because Leigh Fermor had reassured him that he wouldn't be killed.

The general made no sound as the Opel passed through 22 German checkpoints that evening. His kidnappers had their hearts in their mouths as they drove through Heraklion, which was packed full of German troops heading home from the cinema. The pennants on Kreipe's car had a magical effect on the soldiers who reverently saluted at the sight of them. But on the road out of Heraklion, when the car had to pass through the narrow West Gate, the general was forced down on to the floor between the seats. The sentry indicated the car to halt, and strode purposefully towards Leigh Fermor on the passenger's side of the car. In the back, the three Greeks were in full readiness, weapons at the ready. When the guard was almost alongside, Leigh Fermor shouted, "General's car!" Without waiting

13 times

William Stanley Moss tried to reach Crete by parachute before sailing ashore. But bad weather and German anti-aircraft fire scuppered every single attempt.

for a reaction, Moss stepped on the accelerator, noting with relief that the guards were all saluting in his rear-view mirror.

After a couple of hours of driving, Moss, Kreipe and two of the Greeks were dropped off. Kreipe complained that he had injured his leg and hobbled off. With no path to follow, the men would have to climb the rocks and ferry the overweight general over the worst obstacles. Meanwhile, as planned, the car was driven off to the deserted beach.

After a long night's walk, Moss, Kreipe and the two Greeks stopped around 05.00 to wait for the light to be bright enough to ascertain their position. The general had become more chatty and revealed that he'd had a premonition about the ambush shortly before it happened.

At dawn, the men trudged on to a planned spot by a river near the small town of Anogia. Exhausted, Kreipe removed his coat and lay down on to discover he'd lost his Iron Cross, which he'd received after the Leningrad campaign. The loss of his cap coupled with his missing medal upset him greatly.

By the river, Moss wrote a letter to fellow agent Tom Dunbabin, who was staying on Mount Ida. He asked Dunbabin to report to Cairo that the kidnap had completed as planned. One of the Greeks was sent to deliver the letter.

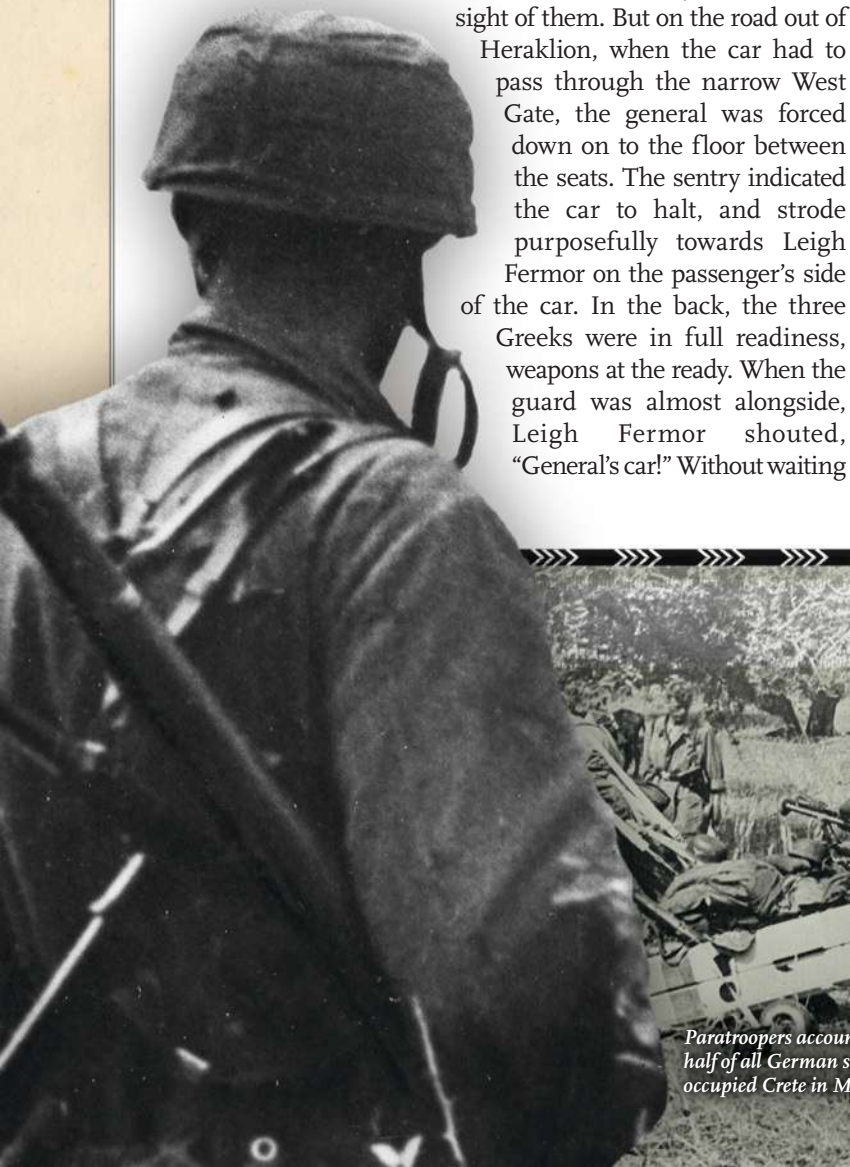
As the sun climbed higher in the sky, Moss took a nap, but was woken by an agitated Paterakis: "Germans coming! Plenty Germans in village!" he warned in broken English.

The company hurriedly made ready to hike further up into the mountains, and despite his exhaustion and bad leg, Kreipe moved briskly. The flight was short – after 15 minutes the men found a rock cave, protected by a curtain of ferns. Here they hid.

GERMANS INITIATED MANHUNT

No Germans came close to the hideout, but at 17.30 the silence was interrupted by the hum of a low-flying German plane and soon after the air was full of leaflets that fluttered to the ground like autumn leaves. As darkness fell, the men ventured out to collect the pamphlets that – as suspected – were about the abduction. Despite smeared letters from a rushed printing, the wording was unmistakable:

"To all Cretans. Last night the German General Kreipe was abducted by bandits. He is now being concealed in the Cretan



OCCUPATION BECOMES BRUTAL

1941

20TH MAY:

The invasion of Crete is launched with the largest paratrooper action to date. German troops occupy strategically important locations.

28TH MAY:

The British supreme commander in Crete,

Major General Bernard Freyberg, realises that the island can't be held and gives the order to evacuate troops.

2ND JUNE:

German reprisals as revenge for civilian resistance begins. Around 200 Cretans are executed up until 1st August.



Paratroopers accounted for around half of all German soldiers who occupied Crete in May 1941.



British agents and members of the Greek resistance movement discuss the best place to stop the general's car. The plan was based on Heinrich Kreipe's habits that the group had picked up from long-term observation of the general's movements.

mountains, and his whereabouts cannot be unknown to the populace. If the General is not returned within three days, all rebel villages in the Heraklion district will be razed to the ground and the severest measures of reprisal will be brought to bear on the civilian population”.

It was clear that the Germans had not yet read the letter that had been left in the general's car – or that they didn't believe the British had acted without Cretan help. Furthermore, there was no indication that they'd bought the story that Kreipe had already left the island. A manhunt was now in progress, and nowhere in Crete was now safe.

As darkness fell, Leigh Fermor, still in German uniform, emerged with his Greek partner from Anogia. They brought with them a mule for the general accompanied by a muleteer – Kreipe was visibly relieved at no longer having to walk.

Under cover of darkness, the whole company climbed towards the Lassithi Mountains and the headquarters of the local “andarte” (Greek resistance), which was a well-hidden cave halfway up a rock face. They arrived at dawn to a warm reception, not just from the locals, but three British agents too.

Also present was the messenger dispatched with the message for Dunbabin. He didn't bear good news – he couldn't locate the radio operator, so Cairo hadn't been notified of the kidnapping and no boat was on its way from Egypt. Moss and Leigh Fermor could see no other option than sending a swift messenger to the other two British operators on the island, but each station was located at the opposite ends of Crete, both at least two days' travel from the Lassithi highlands.

That same afternoon, the four Greeks tasked with taking care of the general's driver appeared, but without their charge. They informed them that the German died in transit from his wounds, and was buried beneath a large pile of rocks.

The heat of the day gave way to a cold night. To keep warm, the men emptied several bottles of raki. Sleep was difficult thanks to a flea infestation in the caves, and with just a few broken hours of sleep between them, the men woke to the news that thousands of Germans were out searching for the general. Several were just a few miles away.

After a quick consultation, the kidnappers decided to cross the snowy summit of Mount Ida – at 2,456

CRETE IN IRON GRIP OF NAZIS

1942

NOVEMBER:

Bruno Bräuer is made commander of Crete. Other German leaders include

Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller, who orders a number of massacres on the island. Müller is later appointed commander.

Müller became known as “The Butcher of Crete”.

Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller



1943

14TH SEPTEMBER:

The Viannos massacre begins. Over 500 civilians are murdered, houses burned down and crops destroyed by order of General Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller. The massacre is retaliation for an attack that the Greek resistance movement completed near the village of Kato Simi.

1944

8TH AUGUST:

In the so-called “Damasta sabotage” a small group of Greek resistance fighters led by William Stanley Moss attacks a German military column. Moss and his men manage to kill 35 German and 10 Italian soldiers, while only one resistance fighter is injured in the attack.



Victims of a massacre are buried in a traditional ceremony.

1945

12TH MAY:

Germans in Crete surrender to British forces. Fearing

reprisals, the Germans don't surrender to the Greeks, but many are later handed over by the British.

Abductors on the run for three weeks

The kidnapping may have been relatively straightforward, but afterwards agents found themselves on an obstacle course as they crossed Crete. With General Heinrich Kreipe in tow, the group was constantly in danger of being captured by German forces.



Heinrich Kreipe's pennants on his car helped the kidnappers to identify his vehicle.



General Kreipe slowly came to terms with his situation after the kidnap.

2 Kidnap occurs at lightning speed

26th April: in a carefully planned operation, the British and members of the Greek resistance stop General Heinrich Kreipe's car, stow him in the back seat and take the wheel.

1 Moss finally reaches Crete

4th April: agent William Stanley Moss arrives by boat after 13 unsuccessful attempts to land by parachute. Moss is met by Patrick Leigh Fermor, who is already on the island.



The group crossed the snowy summit of Mount Ida at Crete's highest point, 2,456 metres above sea level.

metres the highest point in Crete – and continue south to the coast. At noon, the men departed – the general on his mule, the others on foot.

Local resistance fighters had already been sent in advance to the top of the mountain and down the far side to establish a system of flares to establish if the coast was clear for the abductors.

The hike up to the summit felt infinitely long because of the steep gradient. As the men reached the snowy summit, they were forced to move at snail's pace – drizzle had made the ice- and snow-covered rock treacherous and almost impassable.

As darkness fell again over Crete, the group finally reached the top and were ready to climb down the other side. But the descent was even worse – in the dark, the men couldn't see the person in front of them, and the company alternated between slipping and stumbling down the mountainside.

At 03.00 they reached a sheepfold where a friendly shepherd took in the hungry and frozen hikers, offering them bread and cheese in front of a fire. The shepherd then took them to a cave where they could hide all the next day.

GENERAL STOPPED COMPLAINING

At lunch time, a messenger came up to the cave with a note from a Greek named Andoni: the Germans had not yet taken reprisals against the Cretans. But soldiers were arriving to encircle Mount Ida and would likely start to drive towards the mountain the following day.

Realising that time was growing short, the men decided to walk all the way to the foot of the mountain at sunset. Knowing a hard, long march awaited them, even General Kreipe was resigned to the hardship. He had been tight-lipped and constantly grumbling over the cold, sleep deprivation and pain in his leg, but now he appeared to have reconciled himself to his fate.

The men marched through the dark without a break for three hours to reach the rendezvous point with Andoni, where he was to lead them along a path to the coast. But the Greek was nowhere to be seen, and while the men searched in vain, the skies opened and soaked them all to the skin.

The kidnappers were restless and uneasy as they considered their next move, and once again Leigh Fermor read out Andoni's note. To his horror, he discovered that he'd misunderstood the letter: Andoni had actually counselled against walking down the mountainside straight away, having written: "Do not try to come through tonight". The men shuddered at the idea of how close they'd come to being caught.

BEACH WAS OVERRUN WITH GERMANS

Days and nights went by without the kidnappers hearing from Cairo. The group hid in thickets and ditches, where they were frequently visited by helpful Cretans who provided them with supplies and news about the Germans' movements. The beach where they hoped to be picked up from was just a few hours walk from their hideaway, but was now filled with Germans.

Increasingly desperate as they waited, the Brits launched a contingency plan: Leigh Fermor would have to reach a radio transmitter so that he could contact headquarters

War hero knew Crete

Patrick Leigh Fermor travelled around Greece before the war and acquired local knowledge.

At the age of 18, in 1933, Patrick Leigh Fermor decided to travel across Europe from the Hook of Holland to Istanbul. His journey took him through Germany, where Hitler had just seized power. Leigh Fermor was invited to stay in country homes and took the opportunity to perfect his German. After over a year he reached Turkey, and afterwards continued his travels around Greece. The young Englishman fell in love with the country and also learned to speak Greek.

Local knowledge and a talent for languages were big advantages during the war, when Leigh Fermor conducted several missions to Crete. At the same time, he was an important link in Allied contacts with the island's resistance.

The Mani peninsula was one of the places Leigh Fermor visited in Greece.



in Egypt to agree on a date and place of departure from the island. As soon as Leigh Fermor had left, Moss received a letter by messenger from the radio operator in the west of Crete. He stated that a motorboat would arrive for four nights from 2nd May, but Moss knew that too many Germans were on the beach to be able to send a message.

On 6th May at 16.00, Moss, Kreipe and company arrived at a sheepfold near the village of Gerakari. At 18.00 a messenger arrived with a letter from Leigh Fermor. He'd found a radio transmitter and had agreed a new rendezvous with Cairo. The group's mood was much improved, and they were even able to find the perfect place to spend their time waiting for the boat: an abandoned cottage near the village of Patsos where they could hole up for the next few days. Here the group was able to relax and even take a refreshing bath under a nearby waterfall.

On 9th May, Leigh Fermor rejoined the company and the group continued their journey that same evening. Their route took them past a village that had just been burned down by the Germans, but thankfully the enemy had already moved on.

The next few days were spent sleeping during the day and travelling by night, escorted by an ever-changing band of local resistance members who knew every ravine, path and shortcut. On 11th May, they finally reached Vilandro village. This was a night's march

3.500 Cretans

were executed by the Germans between 1941 and 1945. Some were resistance fighters, but the majority were innocent civilians shot in pure retaliation.

away from the coast and would be their last hideaway prior to the departure to Egypt. In Vilandro, British agent Dennis Ciclitiras was waiting with a radio transmitter – on their arrival he immediately contacted Cairo to confirm the departure plans.

As they waited, General Kreipe fell back into depression, constantly complaining about aches and pains.

GERMANS DISTRACTED BY LAUNDRY

At 22.00 on 13th May, the men finally received the long-awaited message: according to Cairo, a boat would pick them up at Rodakino the following night. Suddenly everyone was busy – the group would have to reach the sea before sunrise to avoid being spotted by the hordes of Germans in the area. Armed with automatic weapons, their pockets stuffed with bread and a bottle of raki, the company set off at a fast pace, running and sliding along steep paths.

As day dawned, the group arrived at cliffs near the coast where they immediately fell asleep. When they woke at 11.00, the men marvelled at the phenomenal view of the coast. But a little further down lay a German guard post. Luckily, the soldiers were too busy hanging laundry to dry and sunbathing to notice their missing general a few hundred metres away.

That night, the men sneaked down to the beach, giving a wide berth to the German checkpoint. A cover surrounded by high cliffs proved to be the perfect hideaway because the men could now only be seen from the sea. At 22.00 they started sending the agreed Morse signal. After what felt like an eternity, a muffled engine noise could be heard. As the outline of a boat grew out of the darkness on the ocean, the men couldn't help but cheer. Even the surly Kreipe raised a rare smile.

A few minutes later, the kidnappers found themselves in the officer's mess, where the captain offered them a heavenly cocktail of rum, English cigarettes and a lobster sandwich. While talk went on merrily about the events of the previous few weeks, General Kreipe was left to take a stroll on the deck. From here he watched the outline of Crete shrink and finally disappear into the night.



Kreipe said goodbye to his abductors before being flown out of Cairo.

Opponents met after 28 years

After the kidnapping, General Kreipe was placed in a PoW camp for officers in Canada. He was released in 1947 and met one of his kidnappers 28 years after the dramatic events in a major Greek television show. But the man who should have been kidnapped instead of Kreipe suffered a far worse fate.



The Massacre of Kondomari was photographed by a German war correspondent.



“Butcher of Crete” approved civilian massacres

Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller: the original plan was to kidnap General Müller, but when the British arrived he'd already left.

Müller had been selected as a target because he'd been responsible for several massacres in connection with the invasion and occupation of Crete. In July 1944 Müller returned to Crete, this time as a commander – and more bloodthirsty than ever. Müller launched several operations that left a trail of death and destruction across the island. Several villages were burned.

Müller ended the war on the Eastern Front, where he was captured by the Russians and handed over to Greece. A military court in Athens sentenced the general to death on 9th December 1946, for ordering the massacres. He was shot the following year.



General ended war in Canada

Karl Heinrich Kreipe: after being interrogated in Cairo, the general was sent to a prison camp in Canada where he stayed until his release in 1947. Thereafter, Kreipe led a quiet life. In May 1972, he was reunited with Leigh Fermor on a Greek television show, where they relived the events in Crete in front of millions. Kreipe died in 1976.



Abduction left Briton ill

Patrick Leigh Fermor: a few days after arriving in Egypt, Leigh Fermor was hospitalised at a field hospital after suddenly falling to the ground paralysed – probably due to stress. Doctors feared for his health, but after two months he was completely recovered. Leigh Fermor died in 2011, aged 96.



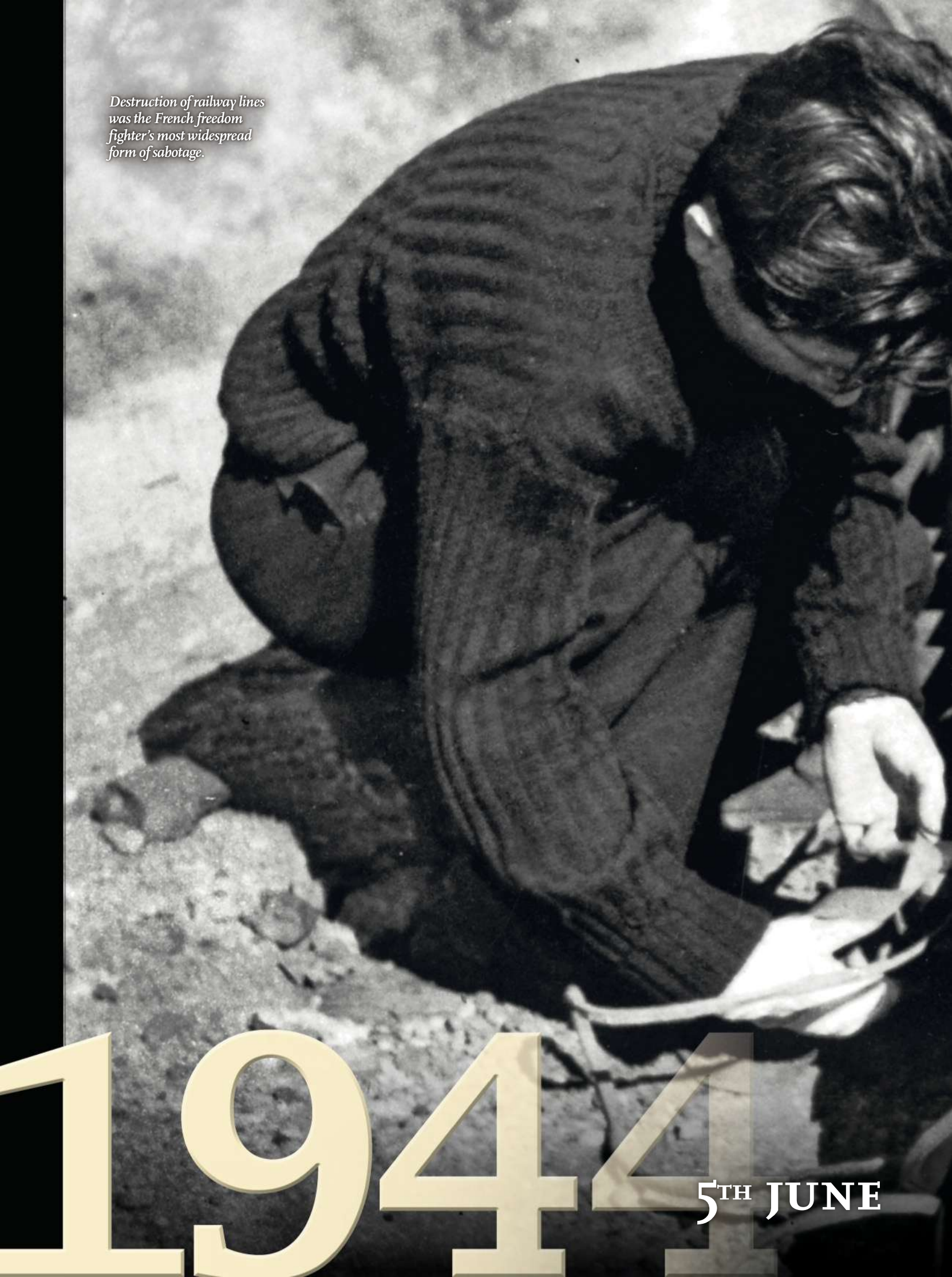
Soldier became a writer

William Stanley Moss: Leigh Fermor's friend and accomplice returned to Crete just a few months later in July 1944. His mission was to help the resistance movement organise attacks.

After the war, Moss wrote several books about his experiences as a special agent, which became bestsellers in the 1950s and were also adapted into movies. Moss died aged just 44 years old in 1965.



In 1972, Leigh Fermor and Kreipe toasted old memories of war in Athens with the Acropolis in the background.



*Destruction of railway lines
was the French freedom
fighter's most widespread
form of sabotage.*

1944

5TH JUNE

SABOTAGE CREATES CHAOS IN FRANCE

The night before D-Day reverberates with explosions across France. Over 1,000 acts of sabotage destroy bridges, railways, power and telephone exchanges. In the morning, all is quiet, telephone lines are dead and power supplies interrupted. The Resistance has created chaos prior to the Allied invasion.

THE STAGE IS SET

France



➤➤ In 1940 the Germans occupy northwestern France, while the German-friendly Vichy government controls southern France. Initially, civil resistance against the Germans is weak and sporadic, but from the autumn of 1943 it improves, and in spring 1944, the British began to arm and train young Frenchmen for battle.

IN THE SPRING OF 1944 FRENCH FAMILIES secretly listened to news broadcasts from the BBC where the broadcasts were often interrupted by cryptic but seemingly innocent phrases: “Aesculapius does not like sheep” or “Romeo kisses Juliet”. Sometimes they would hear the first four dramatic tones of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, which spelled out the letter V in Morse code: pah pah pah paaaah. V represented “victory”.

On 1st June, broadcasts were interrupted by more than 200 mysterious messages. One of them was the first three lines of the French author Paul Verlaine’s poem “Autumn Song”.

In code language, the cypher meant that D-Day would take place within the next two weeks. The messages were broadcast by the BBC, which was a permanent

provider of secret coded communications between British Intelligence’s Special Operations Executive (SOE), broadcast to agents on mission in France, where they cooperated with the French Resistance. In 1940, the French had seen their country occupied by Hitler’s troops after just six weeks of fighting. The French had been left powerless, while Nazi flags bearing the dreaded swastika were unfurled over national buildings, especially in Paris.

FIRST OPPOSITION WAS ILLEGAL WORDS

Ceasefire with the Germans had split the country in two, with the Germans occupying the northern part, while Marshal Pétain and the Vichy regime controlled the south..

Many thought that Pétain had merely saved a few trumps up his sleeve and was waiting for the chance to kick the Germans out. It quickly became apparent, however, that the marshal was an avid collaborator who obeyed the Germans’ every whim.



The Croix de Lorraine was the symbol of the French Resistance. FFI stood for “Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur”.





NAME

JEAN MOULIN

TITLE

OFFICIAL AND RESISTANCE FIGHTER

1899-1943

Top lawyer and leader of resistance

Judge Jean Moulin was an official of the Vichy regime, but found himself in prison for refusing to cooperate with the Germans. In 1941, Moulin travelled to London, where he met General de Gaulle, who sent Moulin back to France to gather the many small resistance groups into one organisation. Moulin under the cover name "Max" was leader of the Resistance until he was taken by Germans in 1943.



- > Was tortured by Gestapo.
- > Died being taken to KZ camp.

Censorship, starvation, rising child mortality, mass unemployment and persecution of Jews – the consequences of German occupation gradually made the population more hostile to both occupying power and its supporters.

There was still some way to go from channelling frustration into active opposition. Most concealed their feelings towards the occupying power and just tried to survive each day. Less than two percent of the population were involved in La Résistance – the name of the French resistance movement – and only a few of those took part in dangerous acts like sabotage and direct attacks. Instead, the majority of the resistance movement

fought a battle with words through more than 1,100 illegal newspapers; others helped Allied pilots and French prisoners of war to escape the country. Some began to spy and gather information about German military installations.

COMMUNISTS WERE PASSIVE

For the earliest resistance groups, one of the biggest challenges was a lack of weapons knowledge. Nearly two million French soldiers were sat behind barbed wire in German Prisoner of War camps, and the only other large group boasting combat experience were the Communists, who refused to resort to using weapons at first.

Many French Communists had participated in the struggle against Franco's fascists during the Spanish Civil War and were experienced soldiers. But in 1940



During 1943 thousands of young men gathered in groups, Maquis fighting against the Germans.

and 1941, Stalin's non-aggression pact with Hitler meant that the Communists did not have to fight the German occupying forces. It was only when Nazi Germany declared war on the Soviet Union and launched an offensive against it in July 1941 that French Communist leaders finally altered their stance.

When they were finally allowed to, young communist Pierre Georges was one of the first to take action. During the following weeks, Georges' group made no fewer than 16 attempts to sabotage the rail network. But only six partially succeeded and the damage was minimal. In October, the Young Communists group finally struck a blow against the Germans. A group had been sent to Nantes to spread word of the Resistance's struggle to the rest of the country where their attempts to sabotage the railway lines failed again. Frustrated, 23-year-old Gilbert Brustlein and his companion stowed guns in their pockets and headed into Nantes on a bright day.

HITLER ORDERED REPRISALS

The two communists caught sight of a couple of Nazi officers on the pavement ahead of them.

The Resistance's comrades set off towards the Germans. From a distance of just half a metre away they lifted their weapons and pulled the trigger. One revolver locked, but Brustlein's hit its goal. Karl Hotz, The German commander in Nantes, fell mortally wounded. The other officer stood petrified as the attackers fled.

Hotz was the Germans' most important man in western France, and his death was a huge triumph for the Resistance. A few hours later Hitler heard about the action and immediately ordered 50 French hostages to be executed. If the perpetrators were not arrested after a day, another 50 French people would be killed.

Two months earlier, the Germans foiled a sabotage campaign in the Paris metro and had made it clear that capture for sabotage would be punished severely. The occupying force even had a list of people who would be held hostage and pay the price for armed resistance: anarchists, Communists, Gaulists, people distributing illegal newspapers and those in custody suspected of sabotage.

AVERAGE LIFESPAN WAS SEVEN MONTHS

The Nazis exaggerated their brutality against the French to try and turn the masses against the Resistance. Even the leader of the Free French Forces in Britain spoke out against the resistance fighters. In a radio speech from London on 23rd October, 1941, General Charles de Gaulle emphasised that the struggle against the Germans should be led by him, and his tactics did not include random German deaths –

Women participated actively in the fighting. Freedom fighter Nicole arrested 25 Nazis on 23rd August, 1944.

simply because occupying forces had an easy job defeating resistance groups.

And they were right. French police and the Gestapo were all very effective. In the Youth Communist resistance groups, the members in 1941-42 could only expect to live for seven months after being caught with a weapon in their hand. Frivolous young fighters also made it easy for the Germans to arrest them. For example, Brustlein and his group celebrated Hotz's murder at a famous Parisian pub associated with communist sympathisers. Here the Gestapo began to shadow them, and 30 of the 32 members of the group were arrested.

Carelessness and flagrant amateurism cost thousands of resistance fighters their life in the first difficult years. In the southern French city of Antibes, the leader of the Carte resistance group kept a full directory of his members – not only with their full name, address and telephone number, but also physical descriptions. When a Carte courier fell asleep on the train, the Gestapo seized a suitcase containing more than 200 names of Resistance members who could easily be arrested. The Germans were merciless. The Resistance were subjected to torture, execution or deportation. Over 100,000



A helmet with screws that bored into the skull was used to torture resistance fighters.

resistance fighters died – either in combat or in prisons and KZ camps.

UNITED BY A COMMON BOND

In the early phase of the Resistance's struggle, its attacks had no significant effect on the occupying power. France was still relatively peaceful and the Germans controlled the whole country with just 30,000 men. In other countries higher numbers of troops were needed to keep the population in check – for example in Norway, where the Germans posted 200,000 soldiers to maintain control.

The main reason for their ineffectiveness was the personal and political disagreement between resistance groups. In addition, people lacked training and weapons. But in January 1942, the situation changed when Jean Moulin jumped out with a parachute over southern France.

Moulin had just been appointed General de Gaulle's "ambassador" in France and had the goal of binding together the resistance groups into a single powerful unit. With his background as a left-wing official, he gained the confidence of the Communists, and with de Gaulle at his back, he also attracted the more right-wing factions

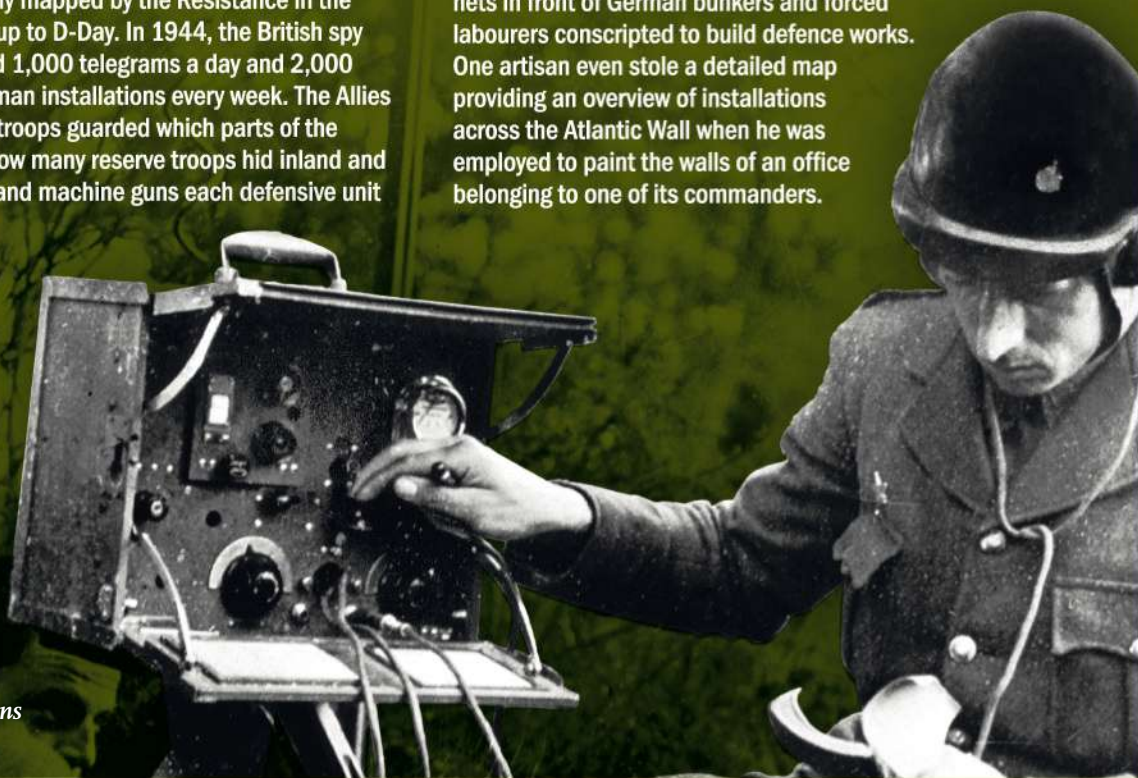
French intelligence was indispensable

One of the Resistance's most important tasks was to spy on the Germans. All vital information was sent to London by courier or by radio.

Normandy's coasts and fortifications in the Atlantic were carefully mapped by the Resistance in the months leading up to D-Day. In 1944, the British spy network received 1,000 telegrams a day and 2,000 drawings of German installations every week. The Allies were told which troops guarded which parts of the Atlantic coast, how many reserve troops hid inland and how many guns and machine guns each defensive unit

possessed. Informants included fishermen who set their nets in front of German bunkers and forced labourers conscripted to build defence works. One artisan even stole a detailed map providing an overview of installations across the Atlantic Wall when he was employed to paint the walls of an office belonging to one of its commanders.

French radio operators were called "pianists". They were often traced by Germans and killed.



The Resistance was organised into small groups that could easily hide in the countryside.



Marshal Pétain controlled the southern part of the country and cooperated willingly with the occupying forces in northern France.



under the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) organisation that was set up to coordinate the various groups.

Air supplies soon began to rain down upon France. About 800 British secret agents trained Resistance fighters in weapons awareness, espionage and guerrilla warfare. The plan was that the Resistance would take out roads, railways and communication centres throughout France when the Allies finally invaded Normandy. Until then, the resistance movement should keep a low profile and prepare thoroughly.

YOUNG MEN FLED FROM FORCED LABOUR CAMPS

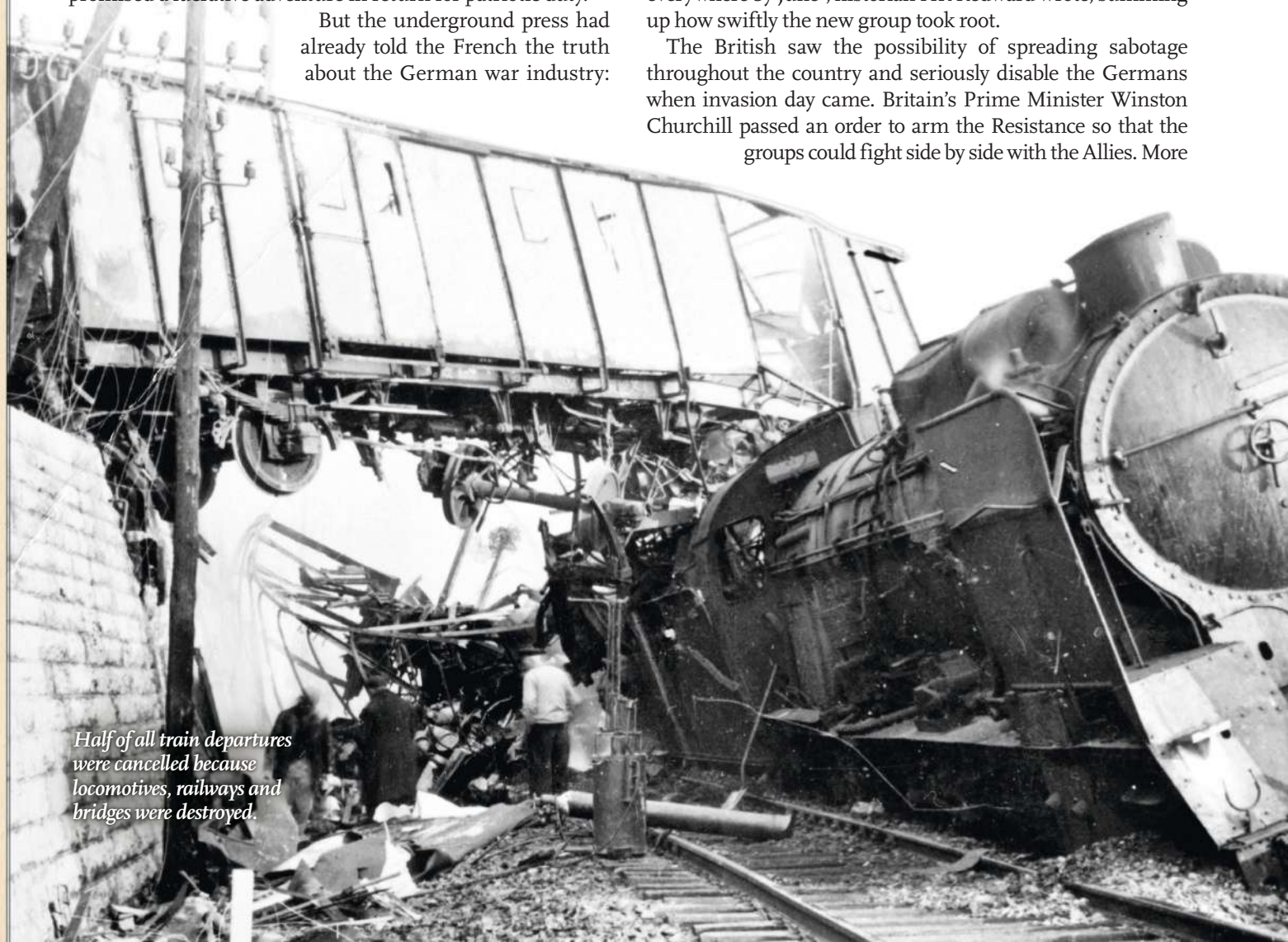
Meanwhile, the number of freedom fighters had exploded. The German arms industry desperately lacked workers, so in February 1943 the Vichy regime introduced a law that forced all French men aged 20-22 years to complete two years' conscripted labour in Germany. Pétain and the Vichy regime promised a lucrative adventure in return for patriotic duty.

But the underground press had already told the French the truth about the German war industry:

paltry wages, food shortages, 12-hour working days and frequent bombings from Allied aircraft. Thousands of young men went underground to avoid forced labour. In deep forests and inaccessible mountain areas, well over 13,000 men under the age of 25 gathered in resistance groups. The groups took their name after the landscape they hid in: maquis (shrubby areas). They were characterised by their Basque berets. On the one hand, it helped identify members to each other, but at the same time it was so common that it did not attract attention.

"[The Maquis] did not exist in January 1943; it was everywhere by June", historian HR Kedward wrote, summing up how swiftly the new group took root.

The British saw the possibility of spreading sabotage throughout the country and seriously disable the Germans when invasion day came. Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill passed an order to arm the Resistance so that the groups could fight side by side with the Allies. More



Half of all train departures were cancelled because locomotives, railways and bridges were destroyed.

than 1,000 tons of weapons and explosives would be dropped over France. The Special Operations Executive (SOE) helped send over 650 tons of explosives, 723,000 hand grenades and 500,000 small arms – including 198,000 rifles, 20,000 Bren machine guns and 58,000 guns – before D-Day. The British made sure any identifying marks were removed, so the sender could not be traced if they fell into the wrong hands.

At the same time, the Maquis supplemented their stockpiles of weapons by stealing from the depots of the German occupying forces. Well-equipped groups of fighters spread throughout France awaiting the invasion.

Along with weapons and ammunition, Allied agents dropped from parachutes as part of Operation Jedburgh. The agents would act as couriers conveying secret messages as well as providing a vanguard for the Allied forces.

BOMBS DISABLED THE RAIL NETWORK

British major John Farmer and Australian courier Nancy Wake, both agents for the SOE, were two of many who landed in France in the spring of 1944, where they were met by representatives of the Maquis. The agents' task was to train the Resistance. Freedom fighters were instructed in a series of sabotage plans under the code names Vert, Violet, Bleu and Tortue, which would destroy the rail network, communication and electricity supply to interfere with German troop movements ahead of and in the wake of D-Day. It would give Allied forces time to land before reinforcements arrived.

Late in the evening on 5th June, while the invasion army was preparing on the British side of the Channel, the BBC sent a message that said: "The dice are on the carpet".

The code was an indication to the Resistance in France that the invasion forces were on their way and that the Resistance should embark on the four planned types of sabotage operations nationwide. From hiding, the resistance fighters appeared, armed with explosives, tools and small arms.

Over the next 24 hours, the rail network was paralysed by 1,000 sabotage operations. Freedom fighters blasted rail tracks into the air, bridges went up in smoke and trains came off the tracks. The Resistance's actions also hit power plants where generators exploded. Some cut power cables, while others raided the country's telephone exchanges to stop communication between German troops. At the end of dead phone lines, frustrated German commanders were unable to keep an overview of the situation. On Normandy's beaches, German troops waited in vain for reinforcements as thousands of soldiers were stuck on the disabled rail network.

Meanwhile, Allied forces fought on the Normandy beaches and created a solid bridgehead for the offensive into France itself.

Germans made civilians pay

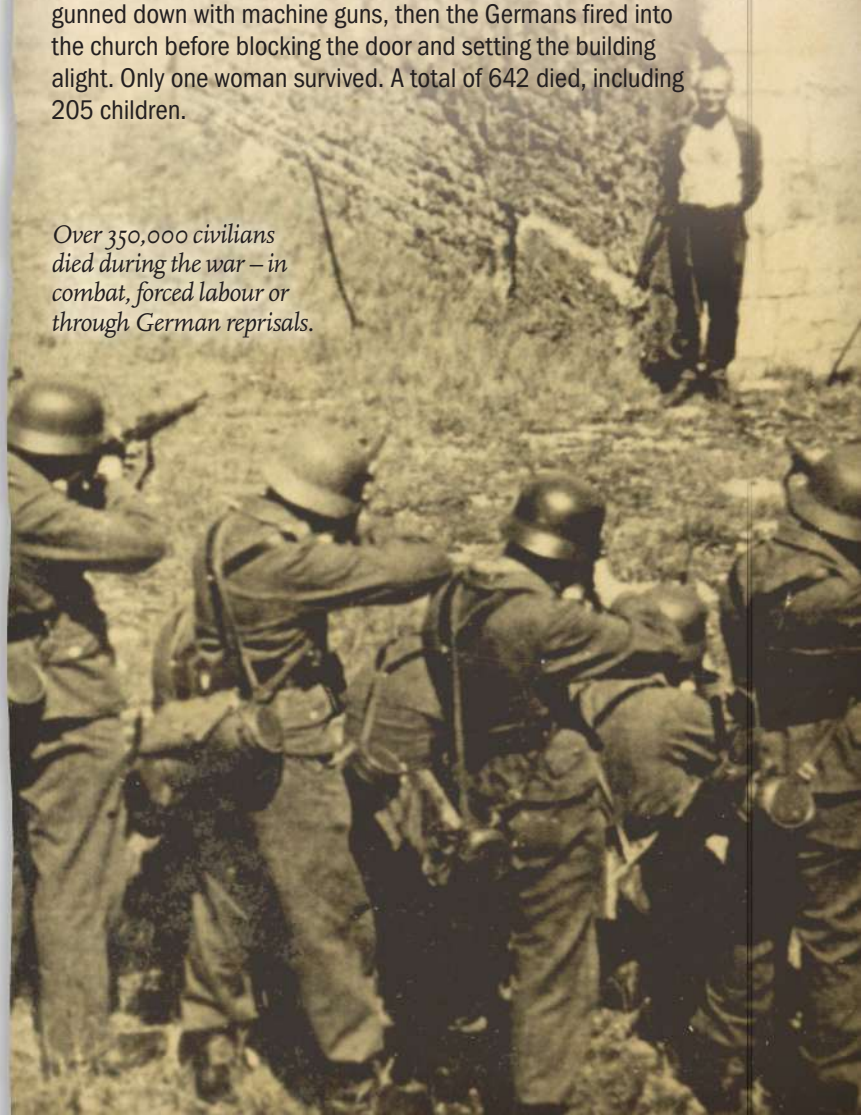
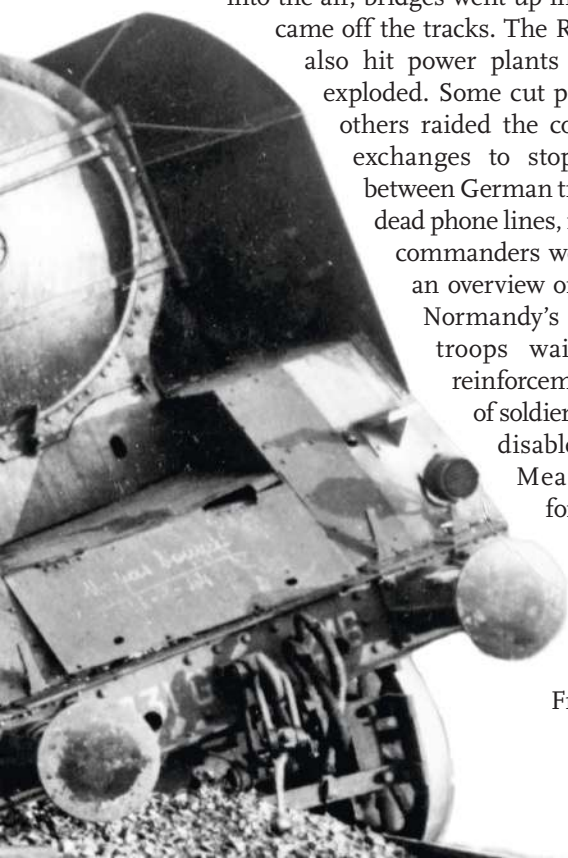
The Resistance's struggle in France took place as the Germans were pushed by the Allies. In desperation over losing their grip on the country, the Germans blamed civilians – men, women and children. One massacre wiped out a whole village.

The poorly equipped French resistance avoided direct battle with the Germans for a long time. But in the spring of 1944, many felt that the underground battle was over – it was now time for an open uprising. For some, the decision was fatal and hundreds of resistance fighters lost their lives. Others had greater success.

North of Toulouse, the Maquis battled with the 2nd Waffen SS Armoured Division. Resistance fighters killed 70 German soldiers and injured even more before they fled. Furious at their heavy losses, the Germans carried out a massacre in the town of Tulle, where 99 civilians were hanged from street lights, telephone poles and balconies.

The worst act of revenge was the Oradour-sur-Glane massacre on 10th June, 1944, when the Nazis retaliated after resistance fighters had reportedly captured a German officer. The village's women and children were herded into the church while the men were gathered in the square in front it. First the men were gunned down with machine guns, then the Germans fired into the church before blocking the door and setting the building alight. Only one woman survived. A total of 642 died, including 205 children.

Over 350,000 civilians died during the war – in combat, forced labour or through German reprisals.



The U-864 could sail at 19 knots when surfaced, making it one of the fastest German submarines.

1944 4TH DECEMBER

SUBMARINES DUEL TO THE DEATH

In December 1944, submarine *U-864* departs from Kiel loaded with Hitler's latest weapons to help the Japanese in their war with the United States. But a British sub lurks off the coast of Norway. History's first underwater submarine duel is about to begin.

Norwegian Sea, 1944–45

THE STAGE IS SET



By the end of 1944, the Allies have fought their way to the borders of the Third Reich. Things are no better for the Germans' allies in Japan, who are suffering major defeats in the Pacific. Hitler decides to send a submarine to Asia. It's loaded with the latest weapons technology to help reverse the fortunes of the Japanese troops.



ON 4TH DECEMBER, 1944, A COLUMN OF TRUCKS arrived in the port area of the northern German city of Kiel. Soldiers were secretly loading hundreds of wooden boxes aboard the submarine *U-864*. The boxes contained detailed blueprints and prototype parts for Nazi Germany's latest wonder weapons. The cargo included plans of the world's first jet fighter, the Messerschmitt Me 262 as well as a Siemens radar system and acoustic torpedo. In addition, troops loaded 61 tons of mercury for use as ignition kits in Japanese bomb production. The mission had been code

named Operation Caesar and submarine captain Ralf-Reimar Wolfram's orders were simple: break through enemy lines to safely deliver the payload into Japanese hands.

The Allies had full control of the sea, however, and since 1943 virtually no German ships had reached Japan. But Hitler wasn't giving up that easily. He was convinced that Japan could regain air superiority over the Pacific, forcing the US to transfer troops from Europe to the Far East and provide Germany's exhausted armies with much-needed respite. But the plan required that Japan receive technological help from Germany.

INEXPERIENCED CAPTAIN WAS SAILING TO ASIA

The following morning, *U-864* departed Kiel. On board was a total of 73 men who, besides the crew, included both German and Japanese engineers who would assist with the manufacture of the weapons in Japan. Captain Wolfram set a course north – in front of him lay a perilous voyage of 24,000 kilometres before he could deliver his payload to the Japanese Penang area in Malaysia.

Wolfram was 32 years old, making him older than most U-boat captains, but he had little experience either in combat or as a commander. All experienced German submarine commanders had long been killed in battle, and the previously feared "grey wolves" were now more prey than predator. Wolfram knew full well that British ships and aircraft controlled the North Sea, but he had no other option than to hope his luck would hold attempting to sneak through enemy lines unseen.

The captain was, however, completely unaware that the British already knew everything about his mission. Since the beginning of the war, the Germans had used the Enigma encoding machine to encrypt radio communications, but the British had long been able to decode the Enigma messages and knew that Wolfram was on his way.

U-864 WAS FORCED INTO PORT

With British aircraft liable to pop up at any moment, *U-864* had to sail completely submerged during the day. After several days of sailing, the submarine had reached Norway's southern coast. But while the country was still occupied by Germany, Wolfram couldn't relax even though the captain had been lucky and not seen anything of the enemy up to this point.

On 29th December, things suddenly went wrong. Wolfram misjudged the sea depth, and scraped the sub's keel on the seabed. The submarine would be forced to dock in Bergen to investigate for possible damage. Wolfram messaged German High Command over the radio, and a few

NAME **RALF-REIMAR WOLFRAM**

TITLE SUBMARINE CAPTAIN

Commander achieved one victory

Despite his age – 32 – Ralf-Reimar Wolfram was an inexperienced commander when he boarded *U-864* at Kiel in 1944.

The trip to Asia was only the German's fourth voyage as U-boat captain, and he had just one victory to his name. On his third voyage with *U-108*, Wolfram sunk US boat the *SS Robert Gray* in April 1943 when it was shipping supplies to Britain.

- Took command of *U-864* in 1943.
- Patrolled a total of 118 days.

NAME **JAMES LAUNDERS**

TITLE SUBMARINE COMMANDER

Briton gained experience young

James Launders' sinking of *U-864* crowned an outstanding career as a submarine officer. He'd already received the Distinguished Service Cross in December 1942 for his efforts during the Battle of the Atlantic.

In spring 1943, he was promoted to Lieutenant and one month later was given command of *HMS Venturer*. In addition to several merchant ships, Launders sunk two German U-boats.

- Remained in the Royal Navy.
- Retired in 1974 as Commander.



Enigma revealed route

When *U-864* sailed from Kiel in December 1944, a secret voyage of 24,000 kilometres awaited. But the British had decoded the Germans' Enigma messages and knew everything about the mission. *HMS Venturer* lay in ambush underwater off Bergen.



The Enigma machine encrypted German messages.

3 *HMS Venturer* lay in wait

2nd February, 1945: *HMS Venturer* lies in wait for *U-864* in the waters off Bergen. The British have decoded Germany's secret Enigma messages and know the U-boat's plans and recent movements.

HMS Venturer

3

2 BERGEN

4 U-boat was torpedoed

9th February, 1945: *Venturer's* torpedoes hit *U-864* off the island of Fedje. The U-boat breaks in two and lies 150 metres beneath the waves. None of the sub's 73-man complement survive.

Torpedoes from *HMS Venturer* broke *U-864* into two major parts, as well as a small central portion.



NORWAY

U-864

2 Sub scraped the sea bed

29th December, 1944: the captain misjudges the depth and *U-864* scrapes its bottom on the seabed. The vessel calls in at Bergen to be examined.

1 U-boat departs

5th December, 1944: *U-864* departs Kiel. On board are many tons of secret equipment and 73 men. Among them are Japanese and German engineers, with two Messerschmitt aircraft designers.

1

KIEL

GERMANY

The trip from Kiel to Penang was 24,000 kilometres. *U-864* could complete the trip without touching land.

ROUTE

BERGEN
KIEL

PENANG

THE
INDIAN
OCEAN

HMS Venturer's 37-strong crew lived in cramped conditions of around 300 square metres.

days later *U-864* entered U-boat pen "Bruno" at Bergen where technicians immediately examined the vessel. In the meantime, the British had intercepted the message and sent around 30 Lancaster bombers to target the pens where *U-864* was docked. The pen's ceiling was reinforced concrete six metres thick, but the British were carrying special "bunker buster" bombs, each weighing almost six tons. The explosions damaged the sub, forcing it to undergo a major repair. But the British weren't yet finished attacking the vessel.

YOUNG BRITON MUST SINK U-BOAT

Lieutenant James Launders was in command of British submarine *HMS Venturer*. Although only 25 years old, Launders had been recognised as one of Britain's best submarine commanders. The 545-ton *Venturer* had – under

his command – sunk 13 enemy vessels in the North Sea and North Atlantic. Launders was also one of a select band who'd torpedoed an enemy submarine as it lay on the surface, but soon he'd surpass even this impressive feat.

The Admiralty in London ordered the captain to sail the *Venturer* to Norway – specifically the island Fedje close to Bergen. Here Launders was told to wait for the *U-864* and make sure the German submarine couldn't reach her target.

Venturer spent three days waiting patiently off the Norwegian coast for contact with *U-864*. On 5th February, Launders was ordered to position the submarine next to the lighthouse at Hellisøy on Fedje's southern coast. By now *U-864* had been docked for almost a month and was finally

SUBMARINES

U-boat was too big and heavy

Although *U-864* was faster, dived deeper and was armed with more torpedo tubes, the vessel still lost to its British opponent, *HMS Venturer*.

Germany's U-boats had clear advantages over their British counterparts. *U-864* could sail twice as fast as *HMS Venturer* and was armed with three times as many torpedoes as normal

submarines. However, *U-864* was a colossus weighing 1,616 tons and 87.6 metres long. She had feet of clay when it came to manoeuvring compared to the nippy 545-ton and 63-metre-long *Venturer*.

Sub's propeller
was powered by both diesel and electric motors.

Front anti-aircraft guns
had a calibre of 20 mm.

Rear anti-aircraft guns
were 37-mm calibre.

U-boat's propeller
motors included two MAN supercharged diesel engines.



U-864

Length:	87.6 metres
Weight (when surfaced):	1,616 tons
Top speed (when surfaced):	19.2 knots
Maximum depth:	230 metres
Torpedo tubes:	6
Torpedoes:	22
Crew:	73

U-BOAT WAS HI-TECH

U-864 was a type IXD2 submarine and had a system that could charge the electric motors while the vessel was submerged.



HMS Venturer

Length:	63 metres
Weight (when surfaced):	545 tons
Top speed (when surfaced):	11.2 knots
Maximum depth:	91 metres
Torpedo tubes:	4
Torpedoes:	8
Crew:	37

SUBMARINE HAD A LONG LIFE

HMS Venturer was a V-class sub launched in 1943. Sold to Norway after the war, she was scrapped in 1964.

ready to continue her journey. The following day, *U-864* departed Bergen and sailed through the deep water of the fjord and out into the open sea right past *Venturer* without being discovered. Launders quickly realised that the U-boat must have slipped past. But now he faced hunting for her over a vast area spanning several thousand square kilometres.

The British submarine commander considered using sonar to search for the enemy. It transmitted a sound wave from the British sub through the water and – when it hit an object (such as an enemy sub), an echo would be sent back. Sensors would then detect how quickly the sound came back to determine position and distance. But the Germans would be able to hear the British sonar and Launders would risk alerting Wolfram to his own position. Instead, the British switched on the *Venturer's* hydrophones –

underwater mikes – to listen for noises from the *U-864's* propeller and engine. Hydrophones were far less precise than sonar, but Launders refused to risk revealing his own position.

U-864 SUFFERED SECOND MISHAP

Meanwhile, Wolfram and *U-864* were finally on their way to the Atlantic when they suffered another mishap. At 05.20 on 8th February, one of the engines developed a fault. This repair could not be made on the open sea, so Wolfram was forced to message command again, which answered that an escort ship would meet the sub off Hellisøy. Wolfram began the return trip to Bergen.

At 09.23 on 9th February, the *Venturer's* hydrophone operator suddenly heard a loud noise in the water and immediately sent a message to duty officer John Watson. The sound was like a fishing boat starting and stopping its engine, but

FACTS

U-864'S SECRET CARGO

- **Acoustic torpedoes** used microphones and advanced electronics to target an enemy's propellers, even if the vessel changed course.
- **Mercury** for Japan's production of ignition kits in bombs and torpedoes. At least 61 tons of mercury in 1,857 metal bottles sank to the seabed along with the submarine.
- **Radars** that matched British technology, which could remove the US's ability to spring surprise attacks on the Japanese.

The hull of the V-class submarine was extended in relation to the previous U-class generation to reduce the noise of its propeller.

HMS Venturer

Deck gun with a calibre of 76 mm.

Periscopes for use during attacks and for navigation fed down through the tower.

U-864

Deck gun with a calibre of 105 mm could be mounted on the front deck.

The bow was more streamlined than previous-generation subs.



The crew of the U-864 stood on the deck in parade uniform when the U-boat was put into service on 9th December, 1943. A year later, the vessel embarked on its first active mission, the crew having spent the preceding time training intensively aboard the sub in the Baltic Sea.

no boats were nearby. On board U-864, Captain Wolfram was concerned by the noise the U-boat was emitting. He knew that any noise in the water could be fatal, but the broken engine made it unavoidable. The submarine commander raised his periscope to scout for both enemy vessels and the escort ship, a fateful move as the British happened to also have their periscope up. Launders spotted the German vessel's thin periscope mast as it rose above the waves.

"We felt a bit shaky because it could sink us the same as we could sink them", recalled *Venturer's* torpedo operator Harry Plummer to BBC2's *Timewatch*. The hunt was in progress.

BRITISH SHADOWED THE GERMANS

Aboard the *Venturer* the entire crew remained silent. Launders and Watson pressed the headphones hard against their ears, holding their breath and straining to hear even the weakest sound that the hydrophones might catch.

"We were hoping that she would surface and then if she surfaced we would be able to torpedo her straightaway", Watson remembered.

Launders followed the U-864 discreetly on a parallel course. The U-boat had six torpedo tubes to the *Venturer's* four, with two firing tubes pointing rearwards. Launders could therefore

not risk lying just behind the enemy in case his counterpart suddenly realised he was being shadowed. After following the U-864 for around an hour, it dawned on the British commander that the submarine was zigzagging to a complicated pattern. Wolfram was obviously aware a hostile vessel might be lying in wait. At regular intervals the British could see Wolfram's periscope pop up to the surface as he scanned for enemy vessels.

"If we ever saw anything of his periscope ... he had a chance to see us, so there's that risk", Watson explained.

Venturer had now followed U-864 for two hours and Launders was forced to concede that the Germans had no intention of surfacing. No one had previously attempted to torpedo a submerged submarine, but time was running out. At any moment the German U-boat might detect the British, and in that moment the tables

would be turned.

Launders could not see his target, and began to calculate furiously. Based on the U-864's zigzagging and half-hourly periscope appearances, the Brit managed to discern a pattern to the U-boat's course changes. The captain decided to take a chance and empty all four torpedo tubes. He planned to aim for



"Bordmutze" side caps were a part of German naval uniforms.

the position he believed – according to his calculations – that the Germans would occupy when the torpedoes hit.

LAUNDERS WENT ON THE ATTACK

At 12.12 on 9th February, *Venturer* was brought into attack position and a few seconds later, Launders ordered, “Fire number one!” The first torpedo sped through the water at 40 knots, its propellers squealing like a siren. *U-864* was located around 2,000 metres from *Venturer*, and the torpedo would arrive around 90 seconds later. After exactly 17.5 seconds, Launders fired a second torpedo.

Aboard *U-864*, Wolfram’s worst fears were realised when the hydrophone operator reported the sound of the torpedo’s propellers in the water. He only had one option left. The captain made a bold order, turning the *U-864* directly into the path of the torpedoes to minimise her as a target. He hoped the torpedoes would stream past the sub and its 73-man crew. While the hydrophone operator listened as the deadly torpedoes approached, the giant sub began to slowly turn. Everyone on board knew that their fate would be decided in just a few seconds.

The German hydrophone operator listened as a third torpedo was fired. Shortly after, the first torpedo arrived, but skimmed past the *U-864*. At the same time, Launders fired the fourth and final torpedo before immediately ordering *Venturer* to dive towards the sea bed. The British sub would not be able to reload her tubes before the *U-864* could launch a counterattack, so had to remain hidden. If none of the torpedoes hit, the *Venturer* would be instantly transformed from hunter into prey. The tension was unbearable.

At 12.13, the Germans heard the fourth torpedo being fired. In a desperate attempt to save the crew, Captain Wolfram ordered the submarine to dive, thus sealing the U-boat’s fate. Launders had predicted this manoeuvre when he fired his fourth and final torpedo. The missile struck *U-864* amidships.

The blast ripped the U-boat apart and sent the broken sub up on to the sea surface. 12-year-old Christoffer Karlsson was the only witness to the climatic end to the bloody battle under the surface of the sea as he stood on the coast of Fedje:

“There was an explosion, a pretty high jet of water and smoke, and then we saw the U-boat sinking down, quietly, peacefully”, he recalled.

At 12.14, Launders wrote in his logbook: “Loud, sharp explosion followed by breaking-up noises”.

Hitler’s last secret along with 73 German and Japanese men sank to the bottom. Nobody survived.

“If you can imagine a box of matches being squeezed into a hand and cracking up – that is the sound of another ship going down. It breaks up”, explained Plummer.

The second that the torpedo hit, the British had won one of World War II’s most unique duels. No other submerged vessel has managed to sink another submerged vessel before or since.

“There was a relief”, Plummer said. “And then the next minute I realised that it was another submarine and more submariners have been killed ... It was nothing to be jubilant about”.

Months later, the Germans attempted to send another sub – *U-234* – to Japan laden with 161 tons of advanced weapons technology. But it was too late. Two months after her departure, Germany surrendered and the sub was ordered to the nearest enemy port to surrender.

Axis powers held together until the last

Nazi Germany and Japan made a firm alliance in the 1930s that lasted until Germany’s final capitulation in 1945.

Japan and Germany shared the same military and ideological interests, and cooperation between the countries developed from the mid-1930s through to 1945. Both bound themselves to each other through a series of treaties and agreements.

IDEOLOGY Japan and Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, designed to combat communism in general, and the Soviet Union and Communist International organisation in particular.

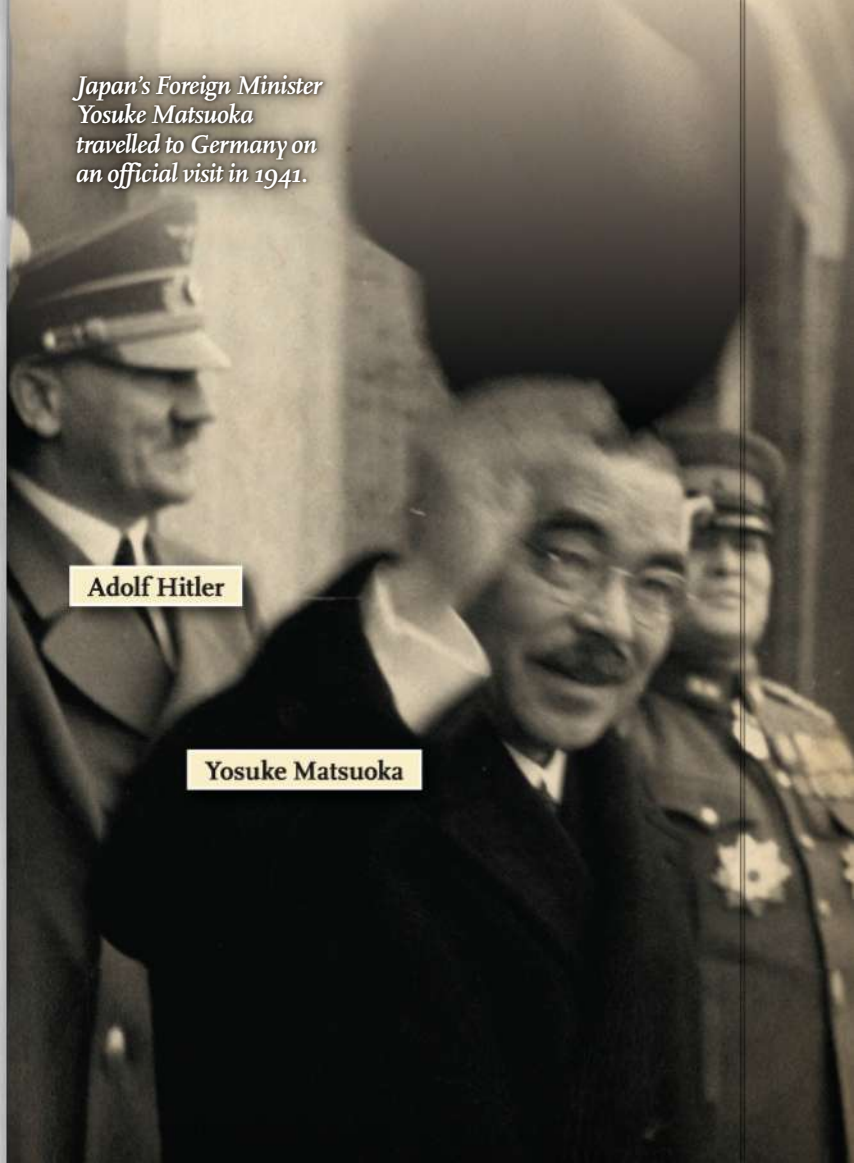
SPHERES OF INFLUENCE In 1940 the Tripartite Pact was signed, which gave Germany and Italy the right to establish a “new order” in Europe, and Japan the same right in Asia.

WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY Japan and Germany helped each other through so-called “Yanagi” (Willow) missions where submarines transported raw materials, chemicals and technology.

*Japan’s Foreign Minister
Yosuke Matsuoka
travelled to Germany on
an official visit in 1941.*

Adolf Hitler

Yosuke Matsuoka



COVER

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DRESSED TO FOOL THE GERMANS

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“The bouncing bomb was tripe beyond the wildest description..”

Those were the angry words of “Bomber” Harris, commander of the Royal Air Force’s Bomber Command. Harris rejected the idea of sending planes deep into Germany to bomb dams. But RAF chief Charles Portal decided to test the idea anyway. Inventor Barnes Wallis developed a bomb that could skip over the dams’ protection and slide down in front of the concrete wall where the bomb would detonate. In the spring of 1943 the bomb was ready and 19 British bombers took to the air. Only 12 reached the target, and 56 men were killed or captured. The story was one of many, where highly trained men risked their lives in Special Operations.

